

NATIONAL

QUALITY
COMIC
GROUP
I.C.D.
2

FEBRUARY
No.70

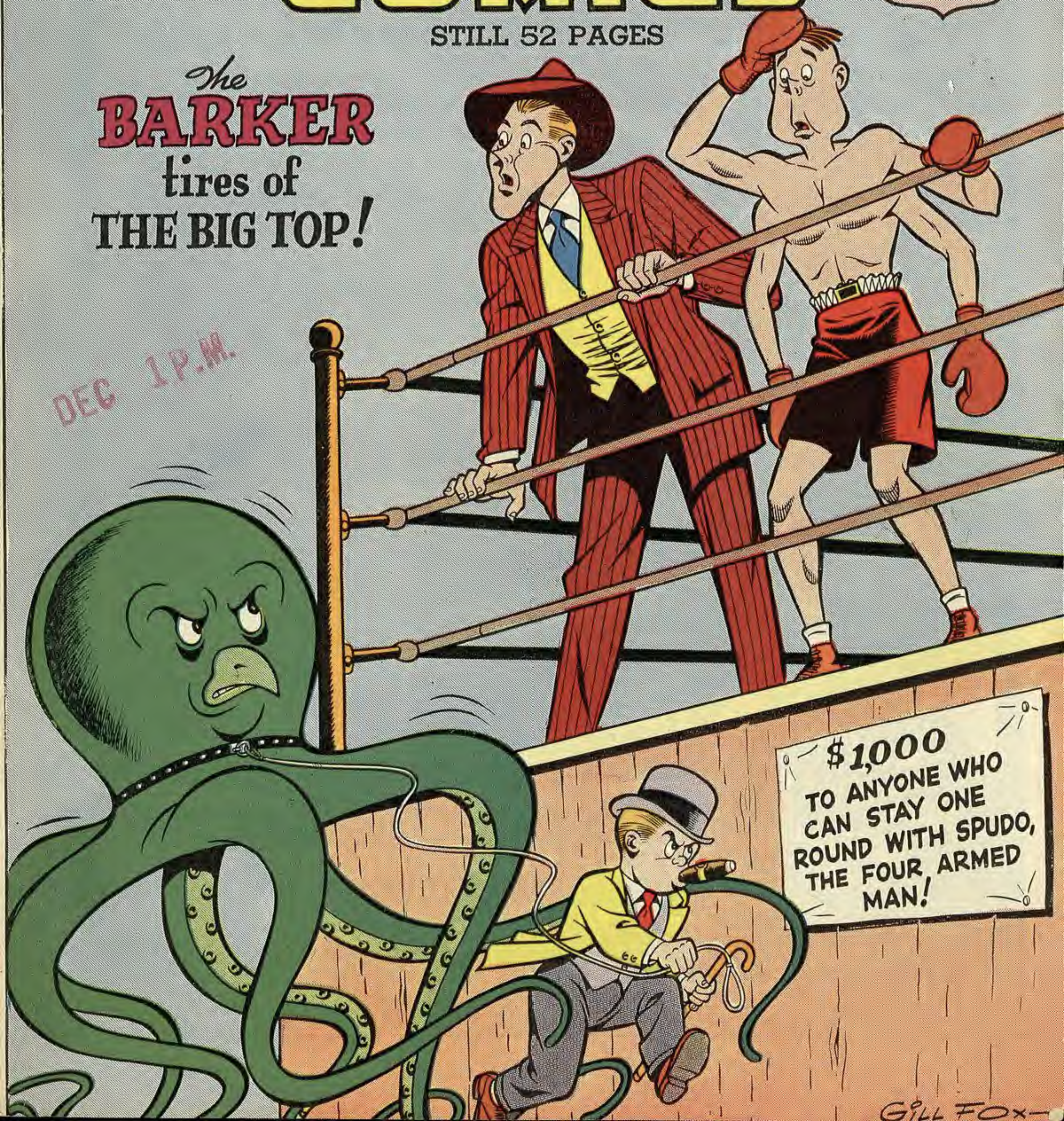
COMICS

10^c

STILL 52 PAGES

The
BARKER
tires of
THE BIG TOP!

DEC 1 P.M.



**WEB COMIC
UNIVERSE.COM**

DO YOU WANT SPENDING MONEY?

Sell these popular Patriotic and Religious Mottoes

SEND US NO MONEY IN ADVANCE

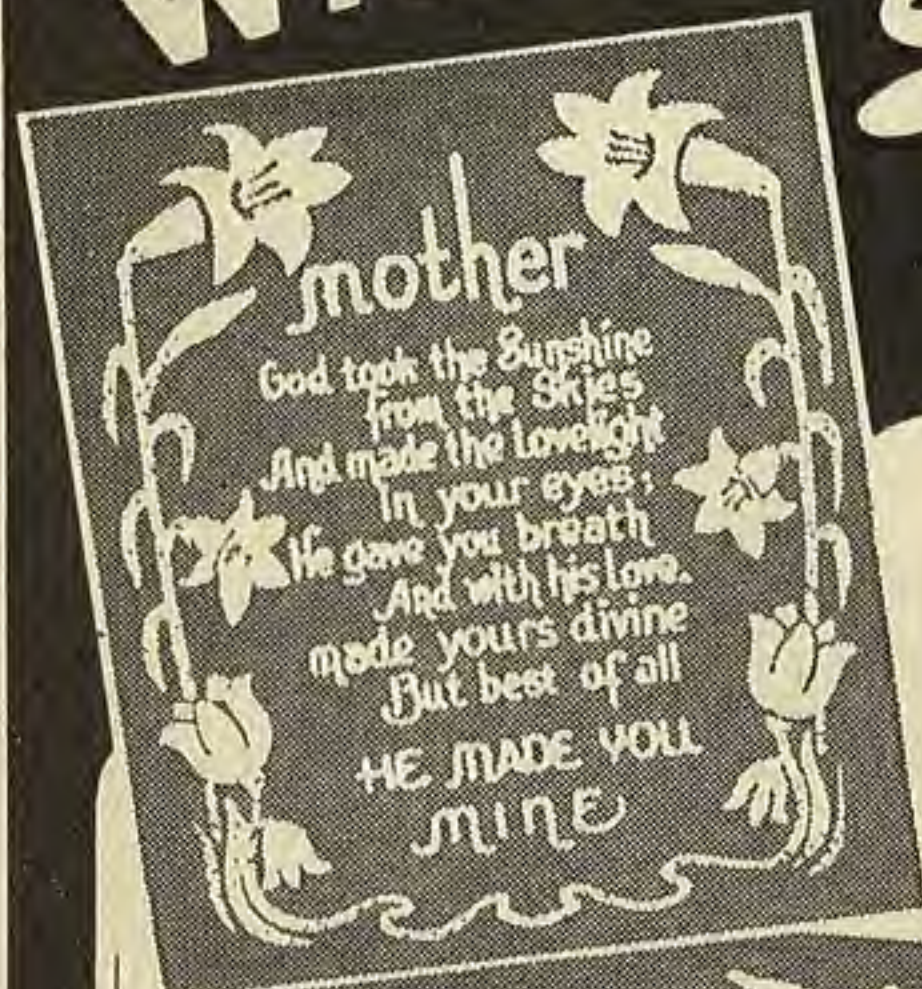
Just write and ask us to send you 40 of these beautiful glittering mottoes which the public likes so well. Sell them easily and quickly to your friends and neighbors for only 35¢ each. At the end of 14 days send back, if you wish, all mottoes you have not sold, and send us only 25¢ for each you have sold. You keep all the rest of the money.

IF YOU SELL 25, YOU KEEP \$2.50

IF YOU SELL 30, YOU KEEP \$3.00

IF YOU SELL ALL 40 YOU KEEP \$4.00

REMEMBER: No money is needed in advance. You take no risks. You can return all the mottoes you do not sell. You do not pay shipping costs or split your commission. You keep all the profit on each sale.



**WRITE
FOR COMPLETE
DETAILS
TO** ➔

STEPHENS CREDIT SALES

Dept. F 80

Normal, Illinois

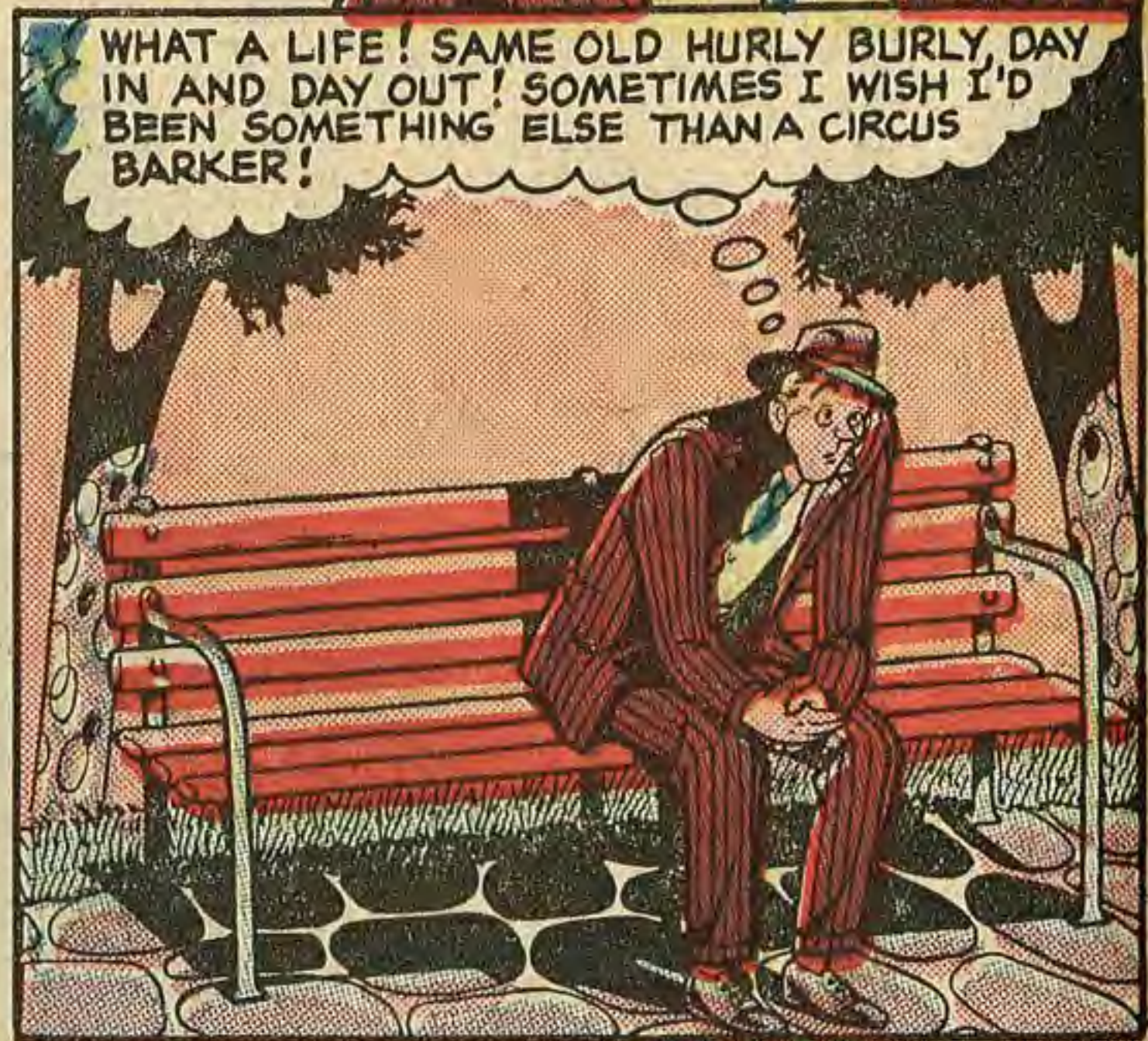
THE BARKER

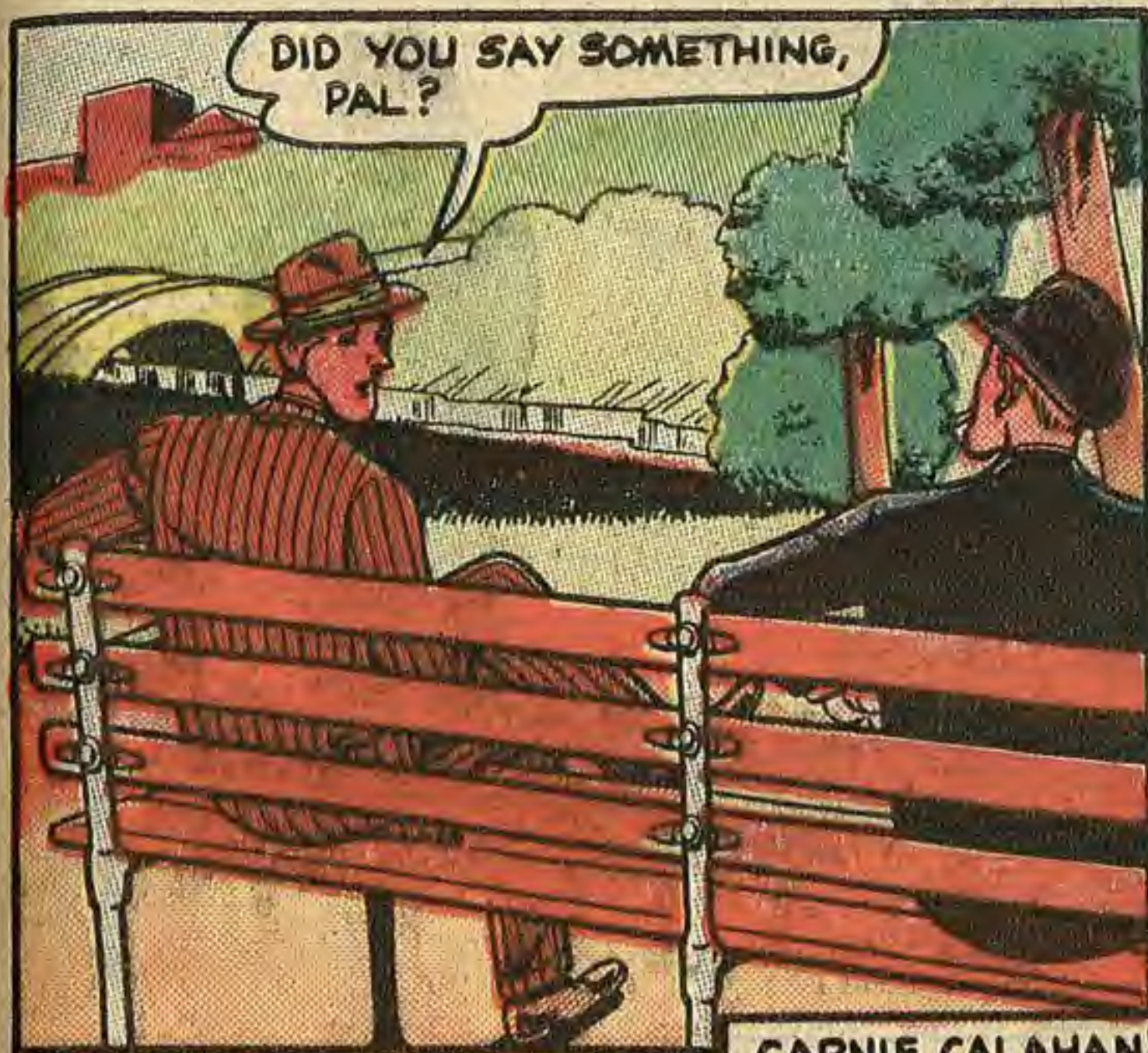
THINK OF IT, FOLKS! SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS AT CURRENT INTEREST RATES WOULD ONLY YIELD ONE-AND-ONE-QUARTER CENTS IN A YEAR! BUT IF YOU INVEST THIS CAPITAL IN ONE TICKET, HERE IS WHAT YOU GET...
BLAH...BLAH...BLAH!

CARNIE'S GONE NUTS! HE THINKS HE'S A WALL STREET TYCOON!



By Klaus Nordling





DID YOU SAY SOMETHING, PAL?



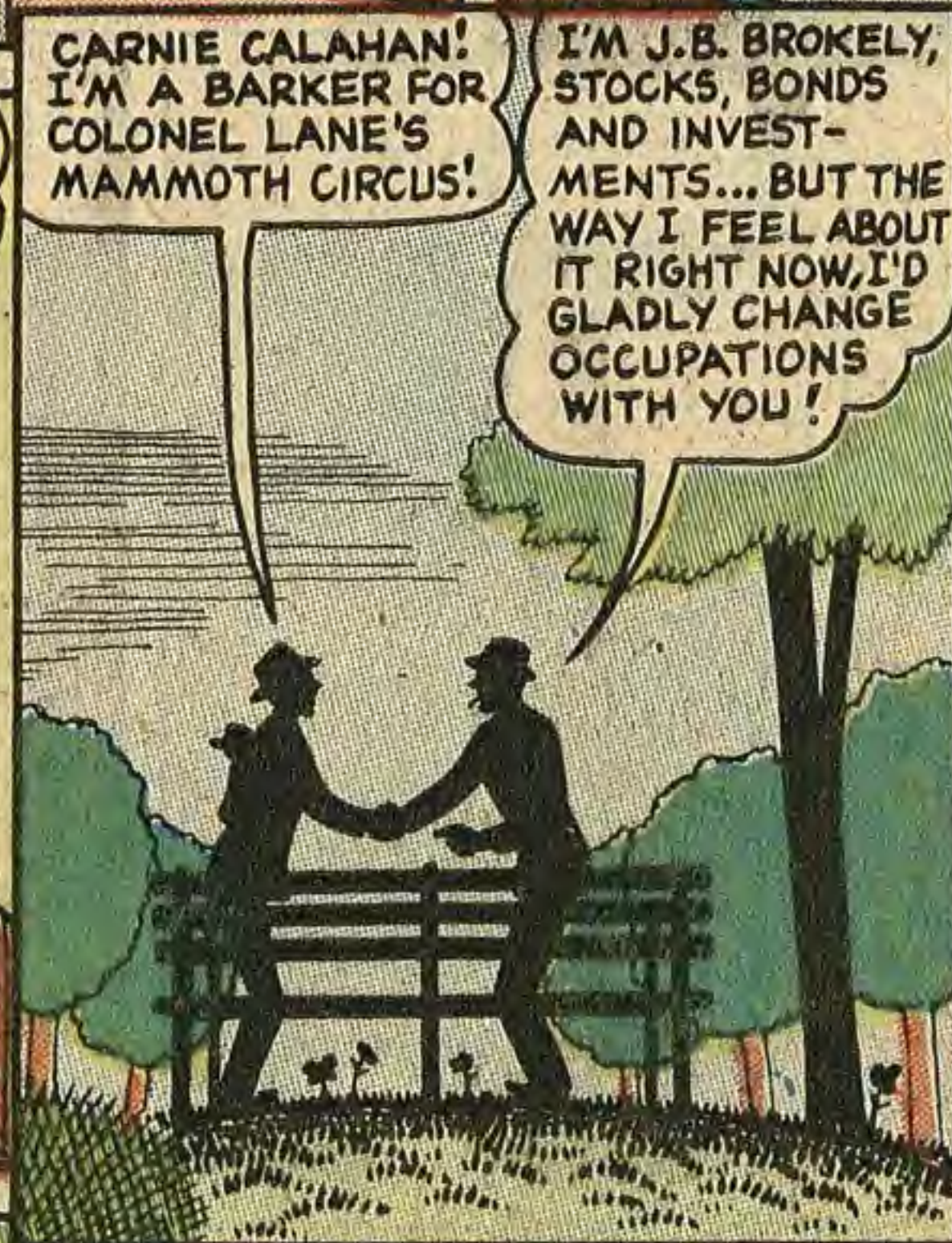
YOU... YOU'RE ME! I MEAN, YOU LOOK JUST LIKE ME!

NO! IT'S YOU... YOU LOOK JUST LIKE ME!



EVERYBODY'S SUPPOSED TO HAVE A DOUBLE SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD, AND MINE'S CAUGHT UP WITH ME! AMAZING!

I'D NEVER HAVE BELIEVED IT POSSIBLE! WHAT'S YOUR NAME?



CARNIE CALAHAN! I'M A BARKER FOR COLONEL LANE'S MAMMOTH CIRCUS!

I'M J.B. BROKELY, STOCKS, BONDS AND INVESTMENTS... BUT THE WAY I FEEL ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW, I'D GLADLY CHANGE OCCUPATIONS WITH YOU!



THAT'S FUNNY! I WAS JUST THINKING THE SAME THING!

WELL... WHY DON'T WE DO IT?



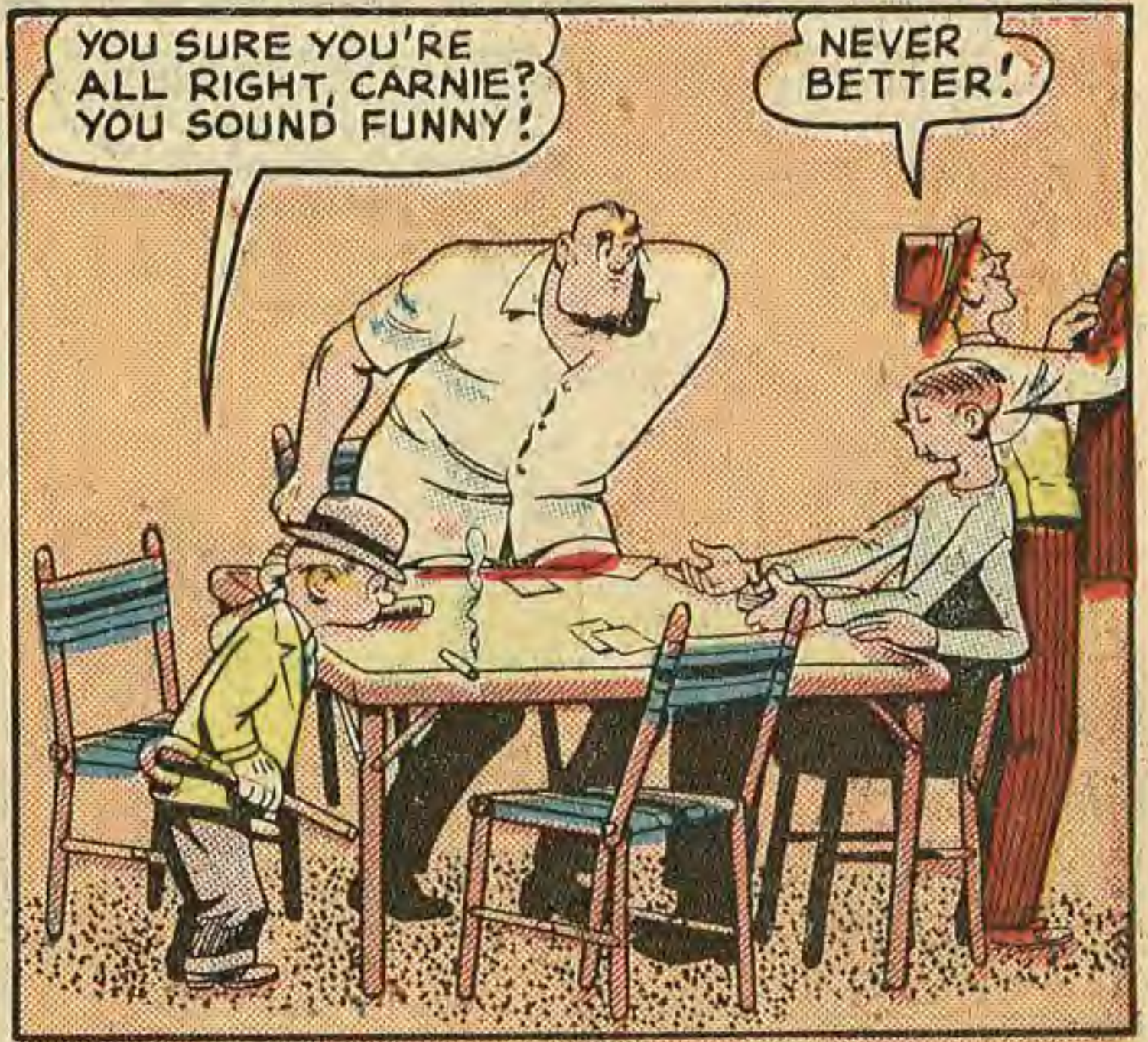
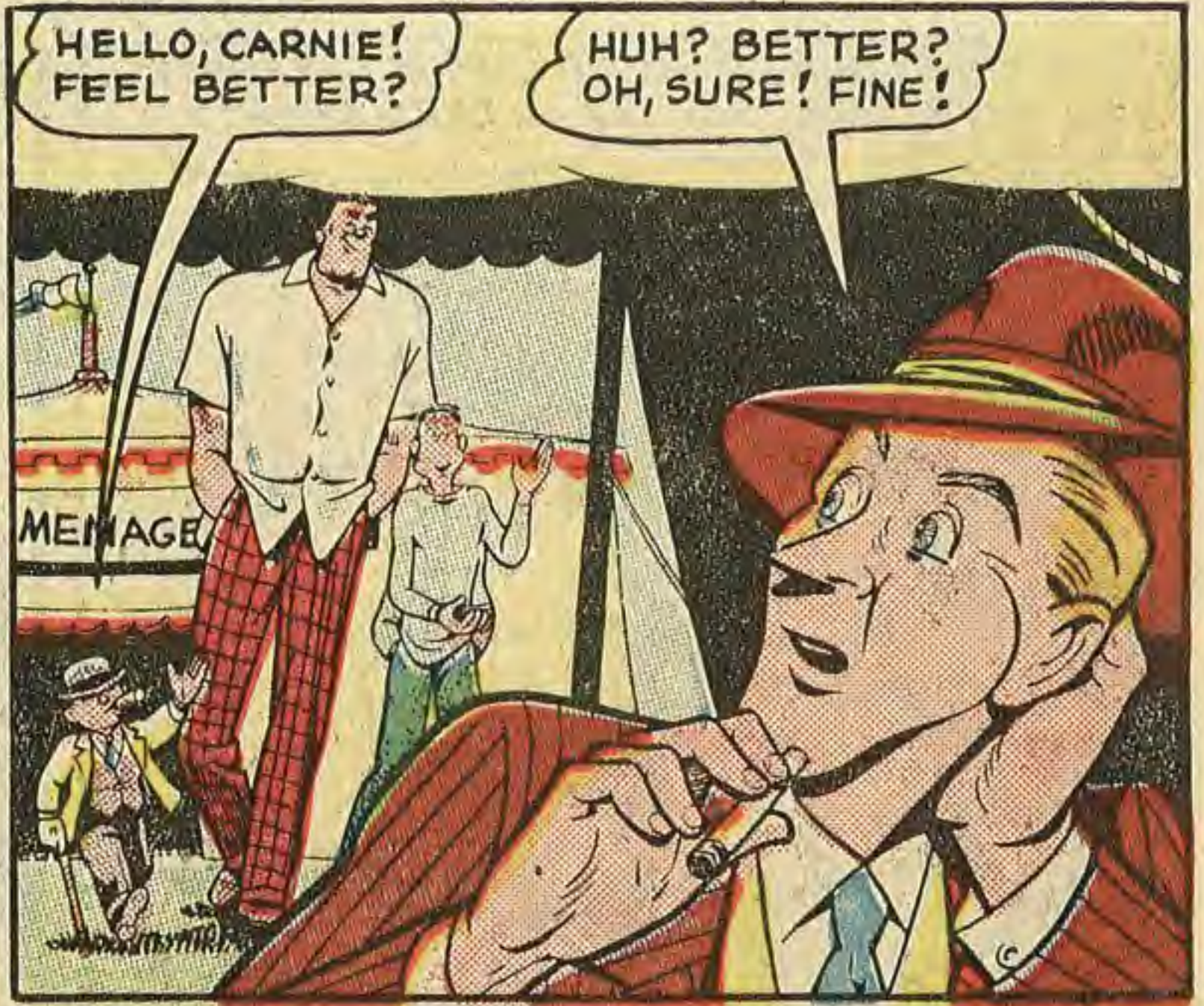
YEAH! WHY NOT? IT'D BE SOMETHING TO BREAK AWAY FROM THE ROUTINE FOR AWHILE, AND NOBODY'D KNOW THE DIFFERENCE!

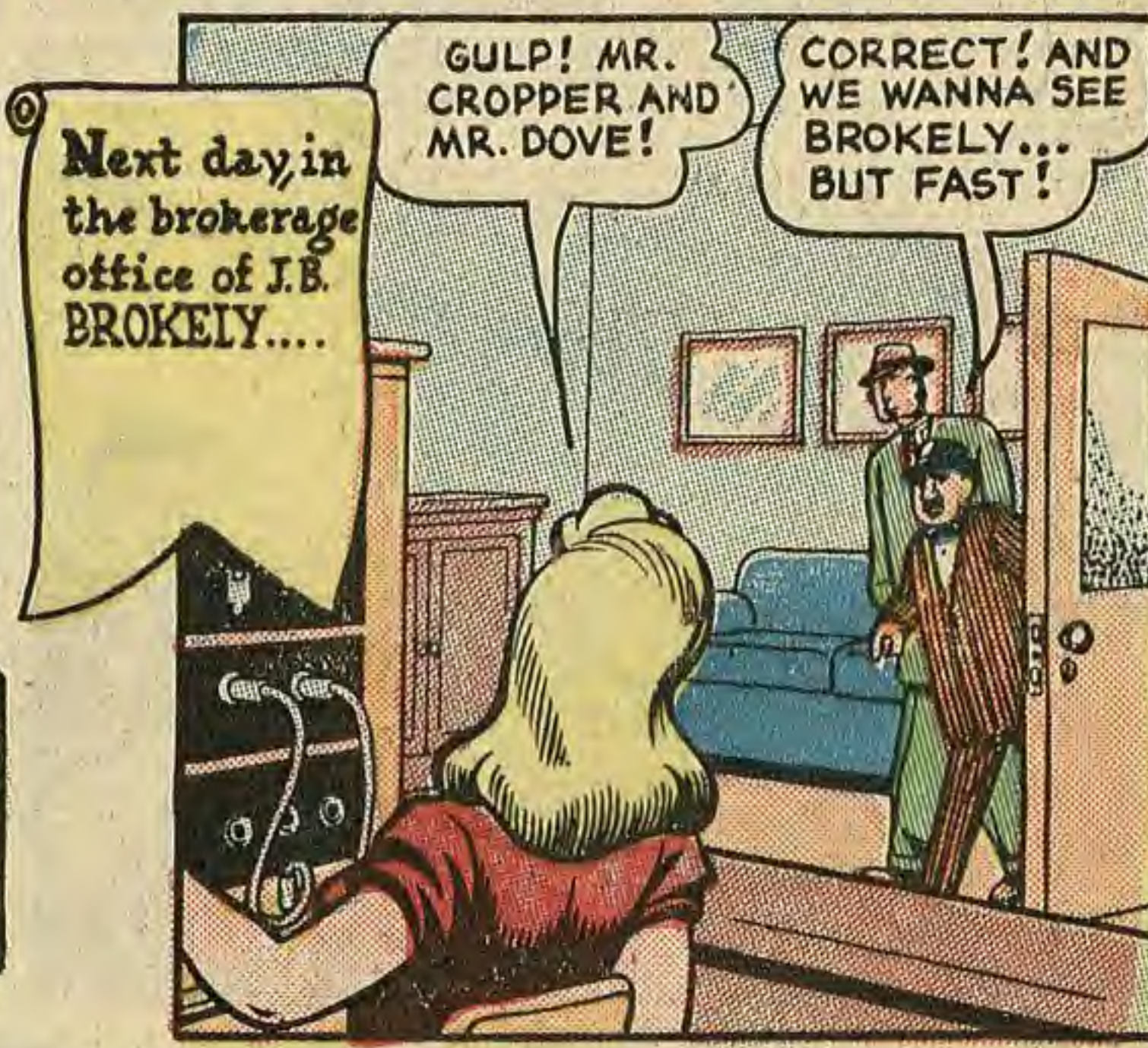
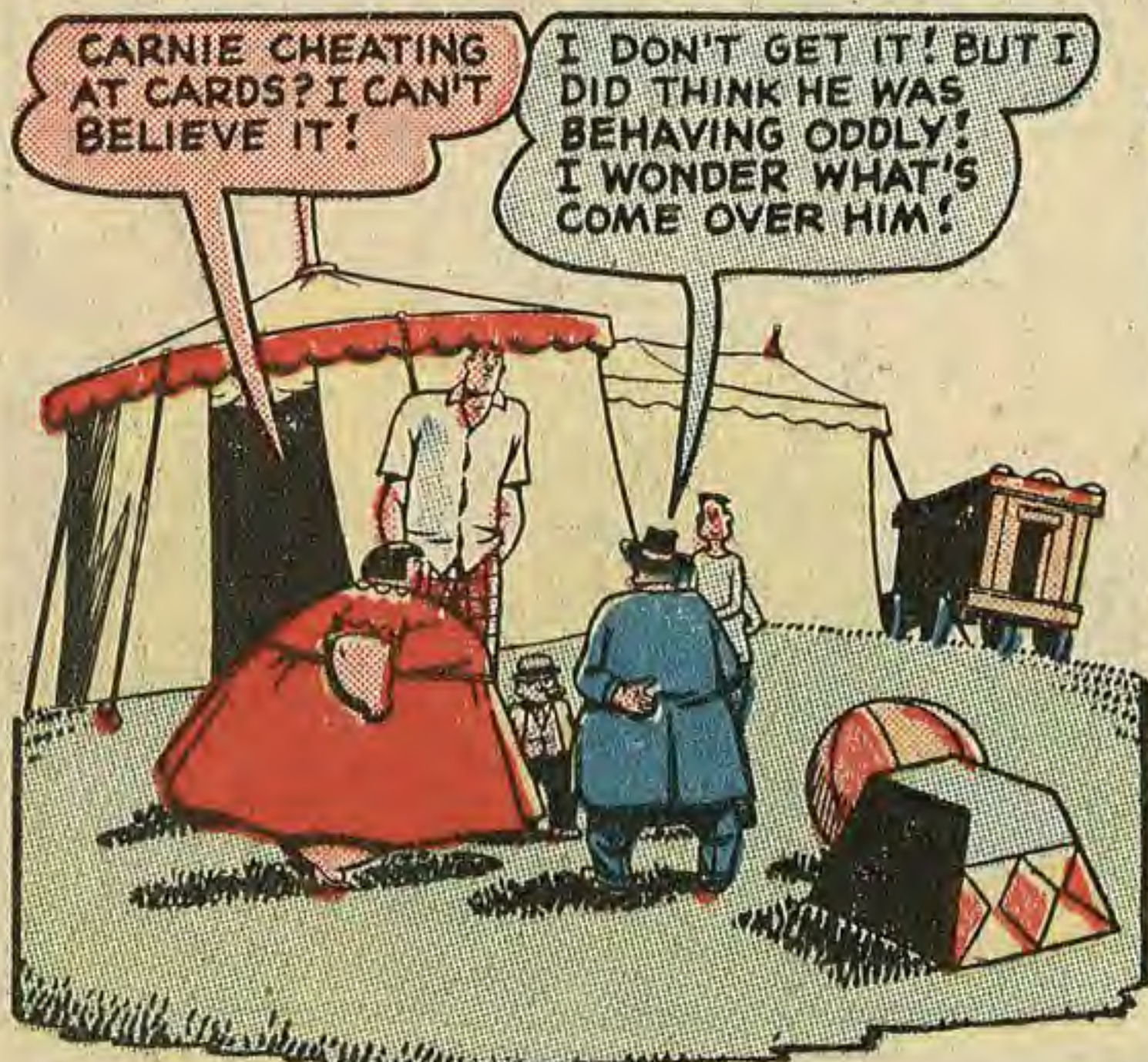
MY SENTIMENTS EXACTLY! IT'S A DEAL!



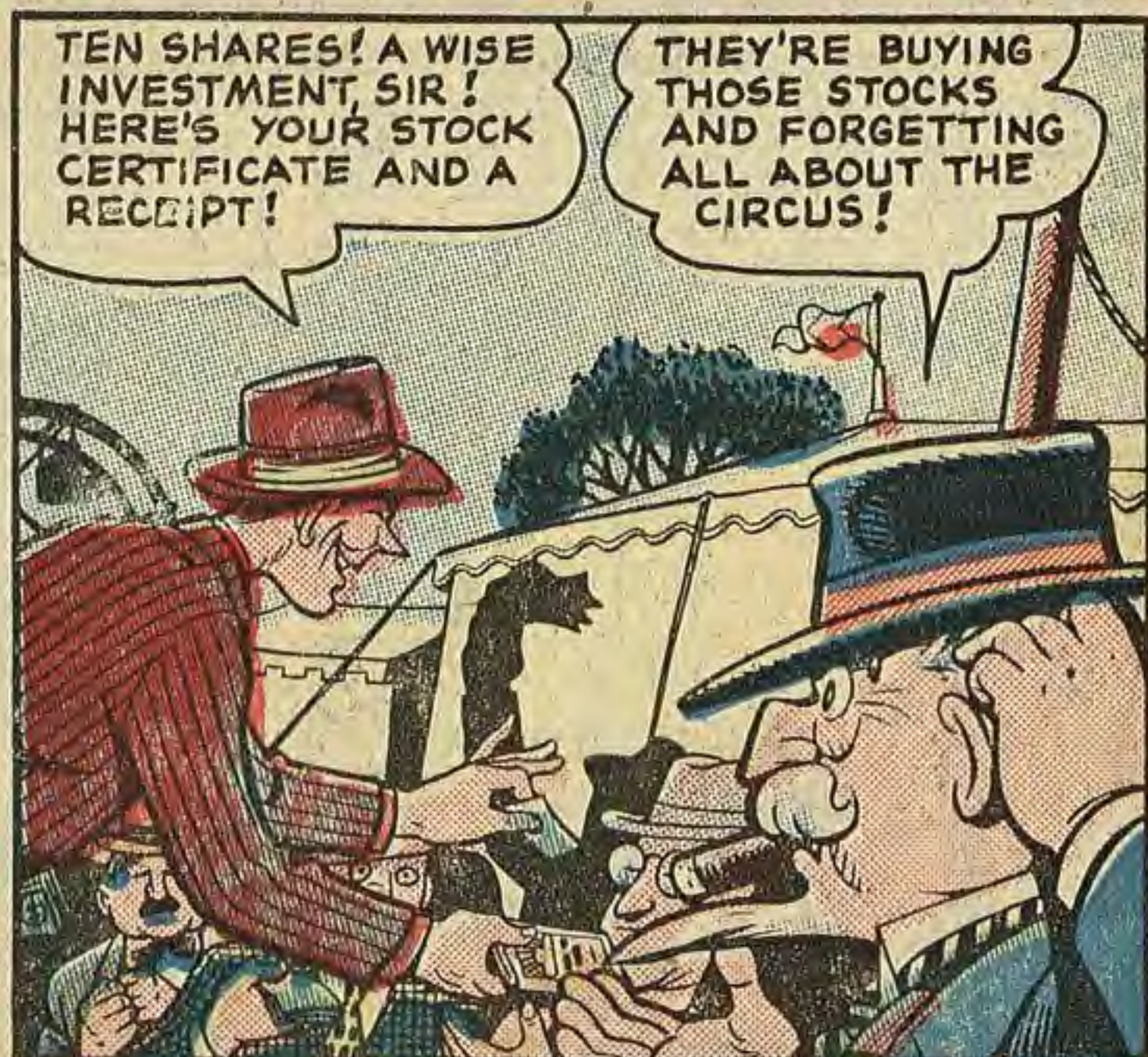
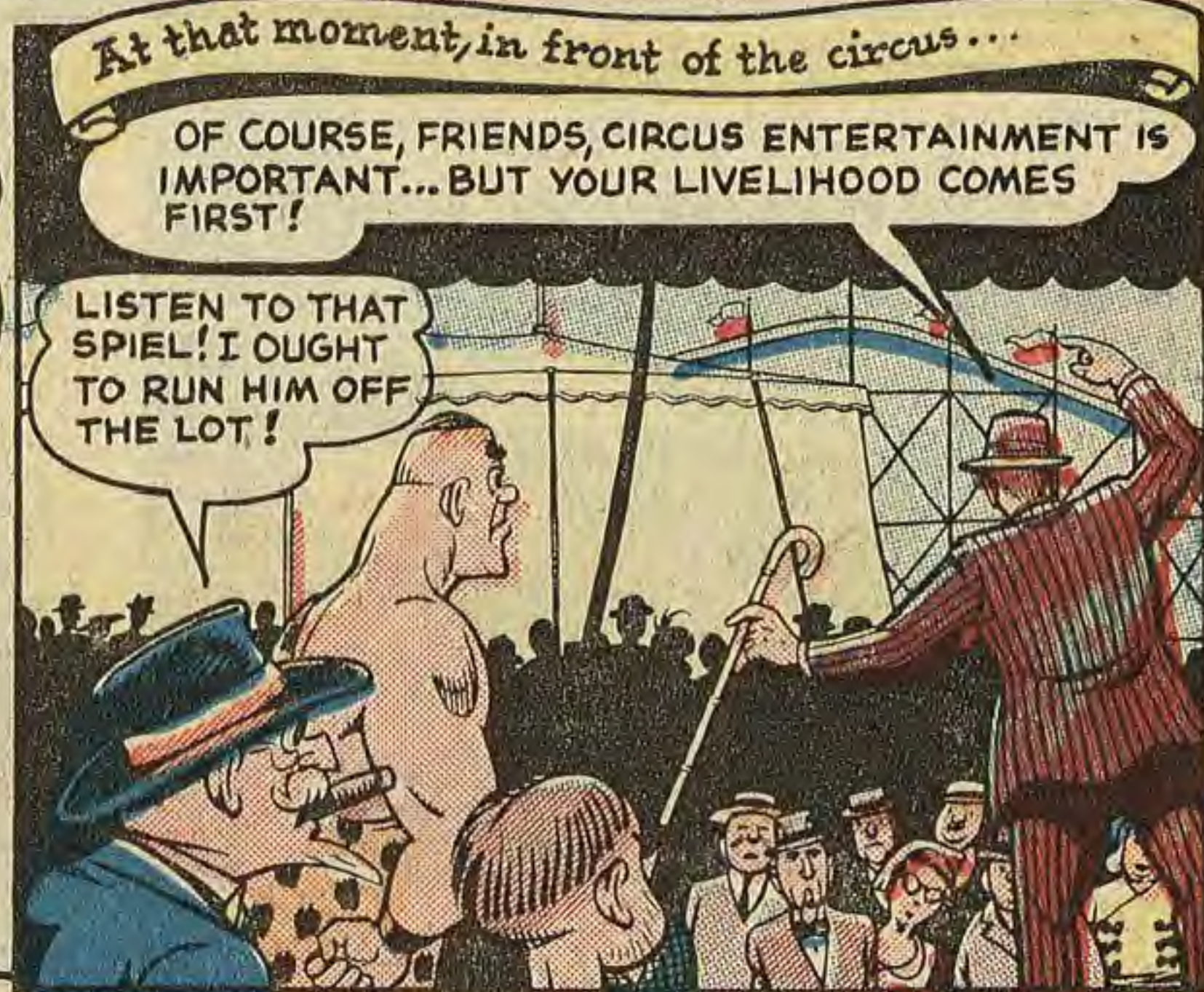
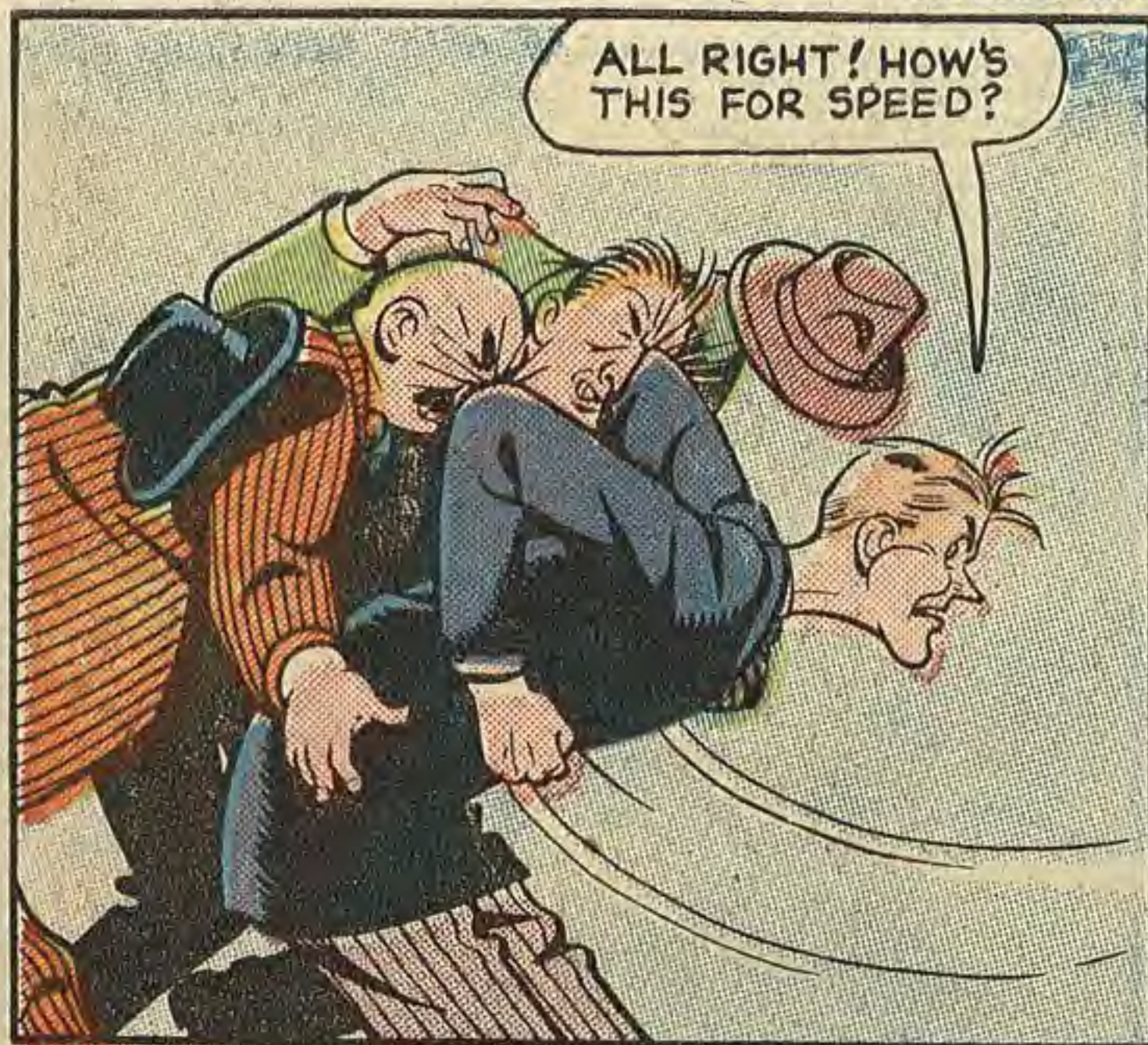
WE CAN EXCHANGE CLOTHES RIGHT HERE!

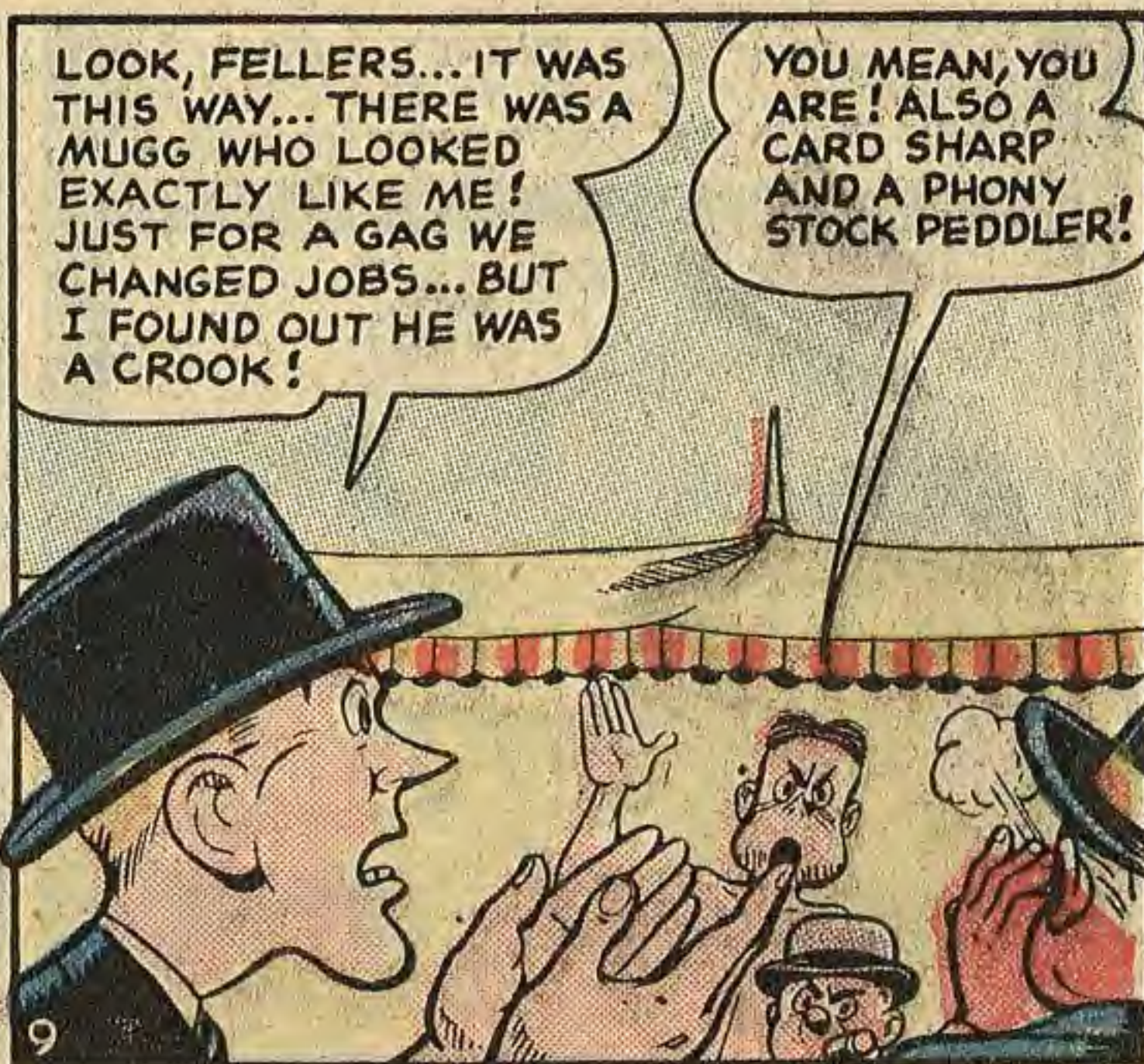
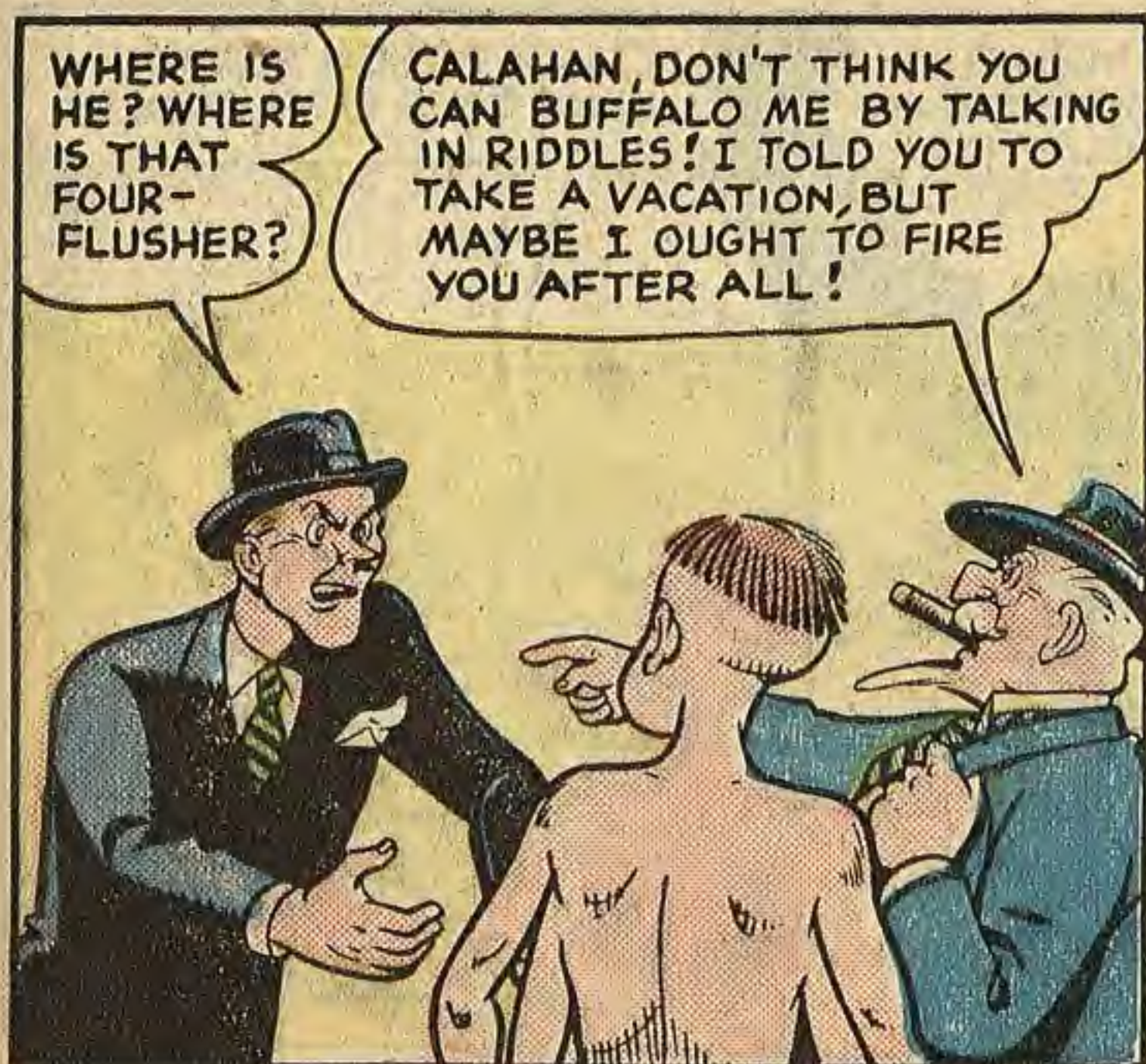


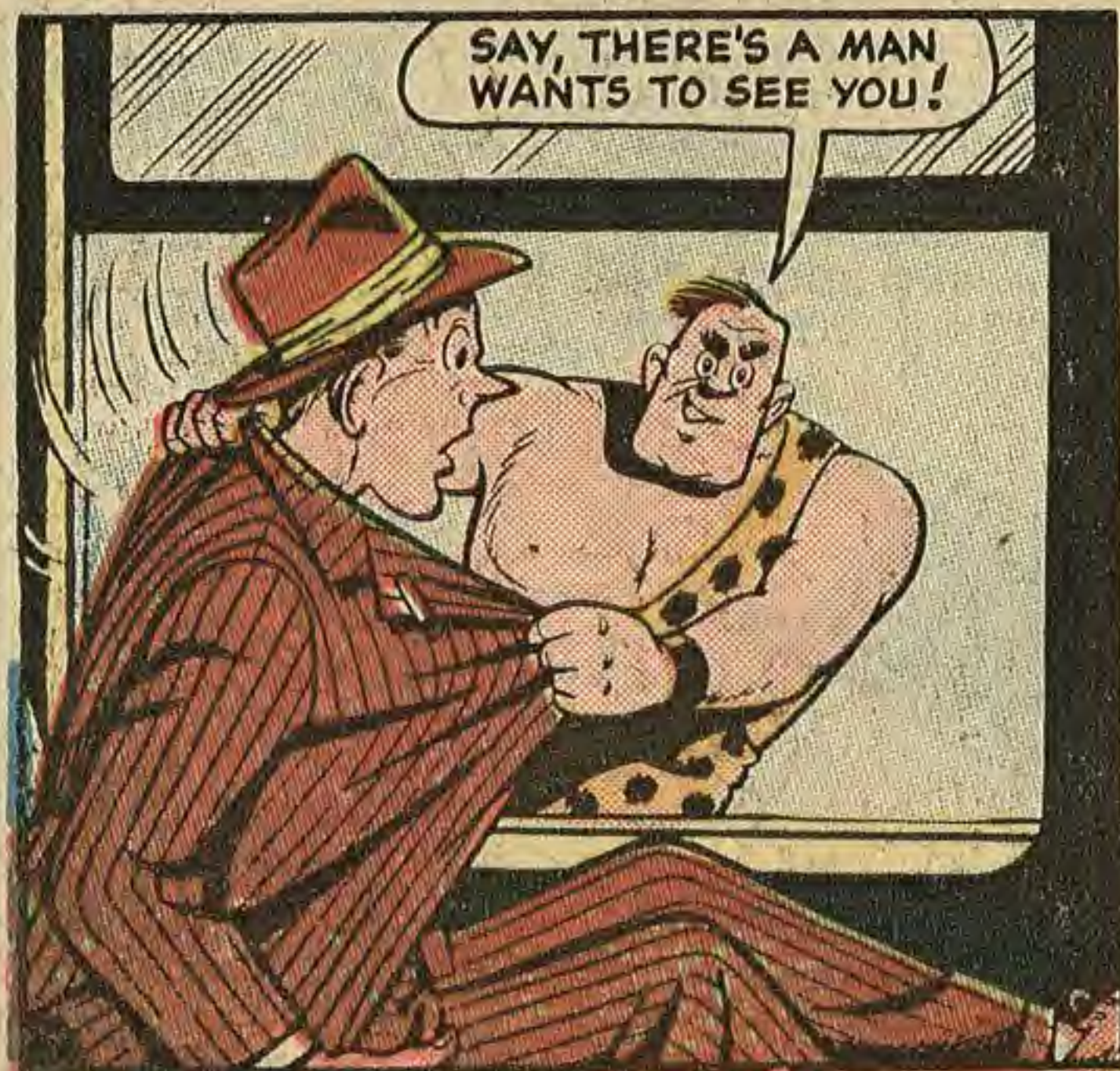
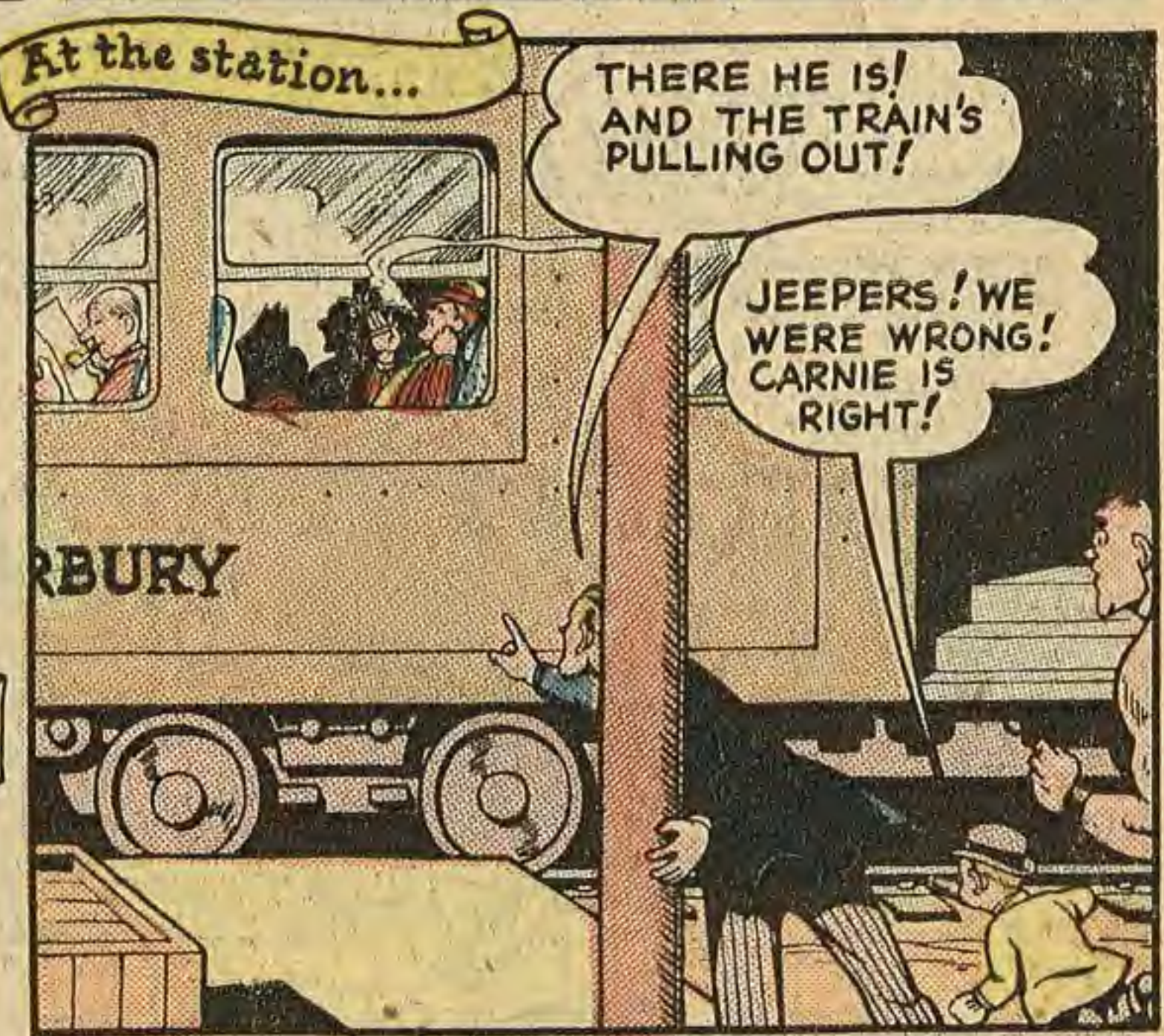
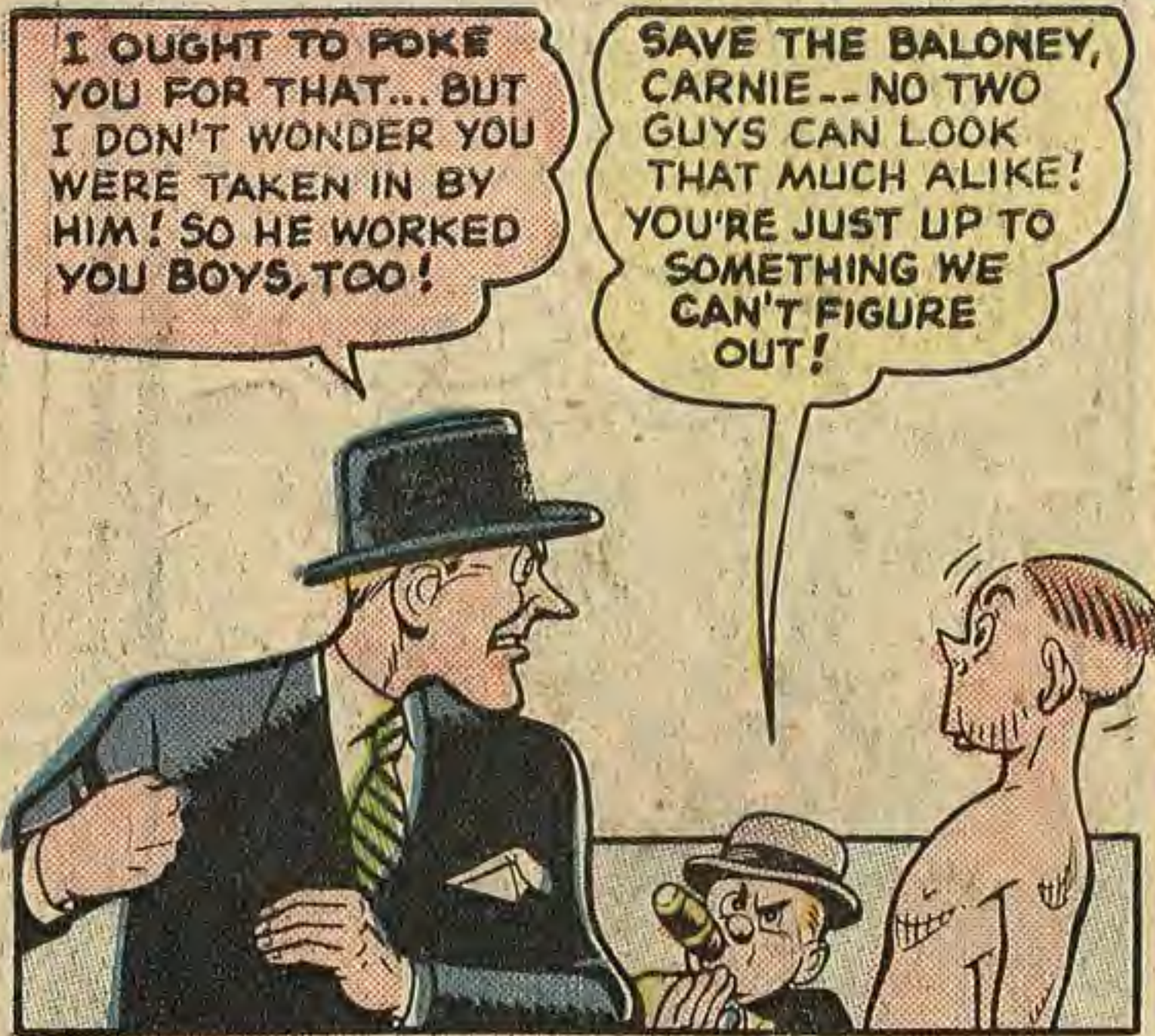










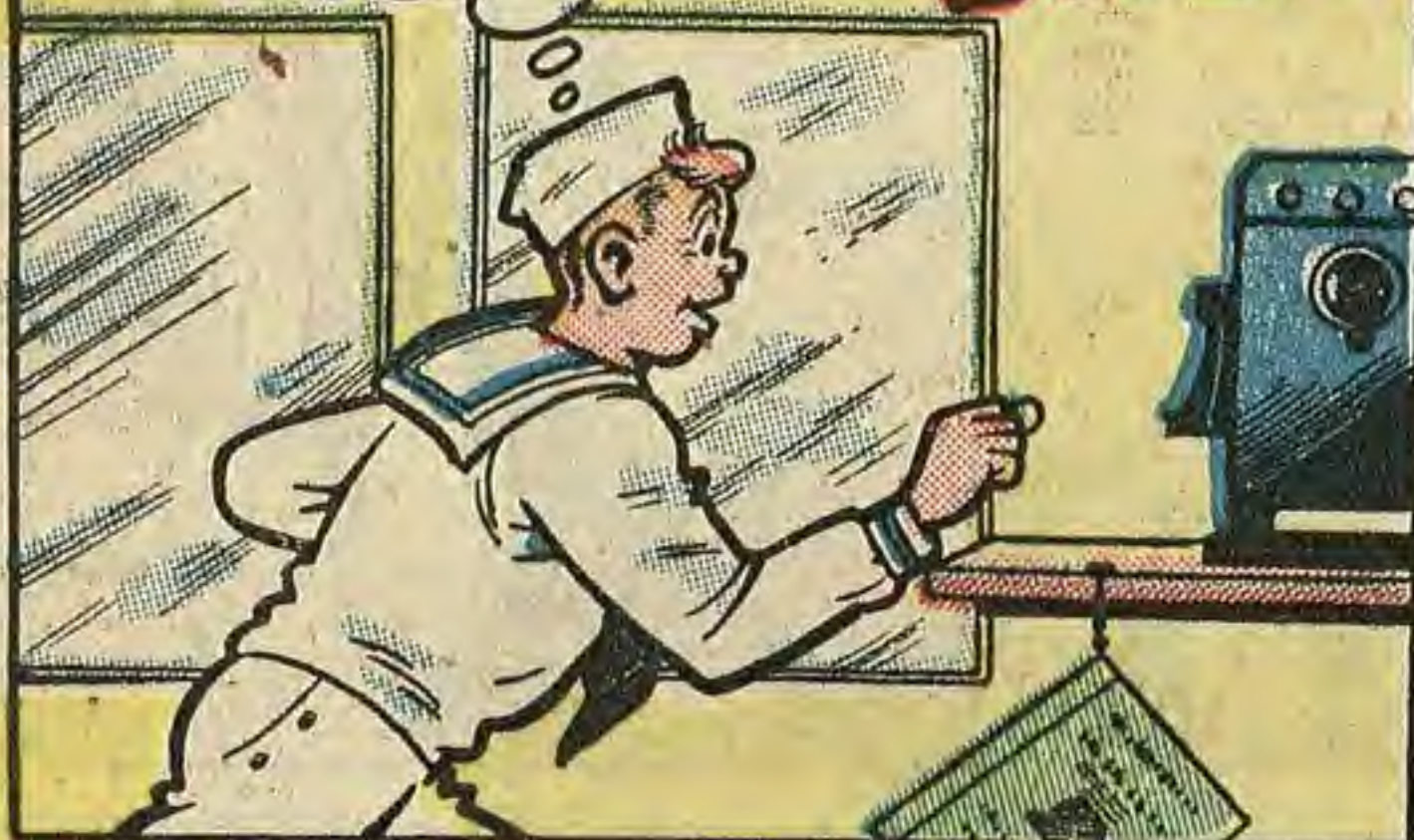




MY KID NEPHEW IS CRAZY ABOUT TALL SEA STORIES, SO I'M GONNA CALL HIM UP AND PRETEND I'M PHONING HIM FROM MID-OCEAN!

Salty Waters

HI, OSWALD! THIS IS SALTY... RADIO-PHONING YOU FROM THE HIGH SEAS WITH A TALE THAT'LL MAKE YOUR HAIR CURL, MATE!



WE'VE BEEN BATTLING WATER SPOUTS ALL DAY, AND S'HELP ME, THERE'S ONE RIGHT NOW OFF OUR PORT BOW, THAT MAKES THE BIKINI ATOM BOMB LOOK LIKE A SOAP BUBBLE!

I WAS WASHED OVERBOARD AND RODE A WHALE FOR FIVE MILES BEFORE I THUMBED A PORPOISE GOING THE OTHER WAY AND HITCHHIKED BACK TO THE SHIP!

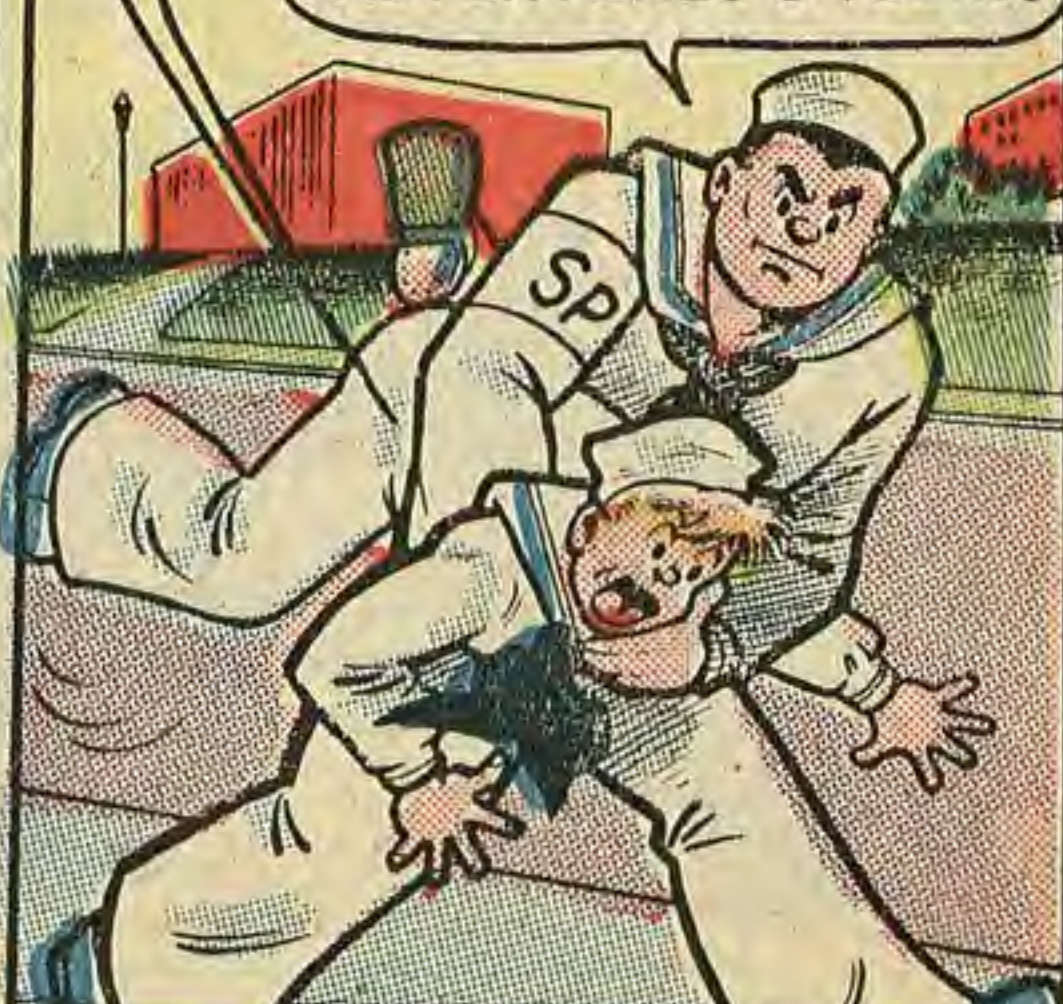
AND THAT AIN'T ALL! RIGHT NOW THERE'S A SEA MONSTER STICKING HIS NECK UP OVER THE BOW!



THE MOST HORRIBLE-LOOKIN' THING YOU EVER SAW... AND WHAT'S WORSE-- IT'S MAKIN' A NOISE... LISTEN...

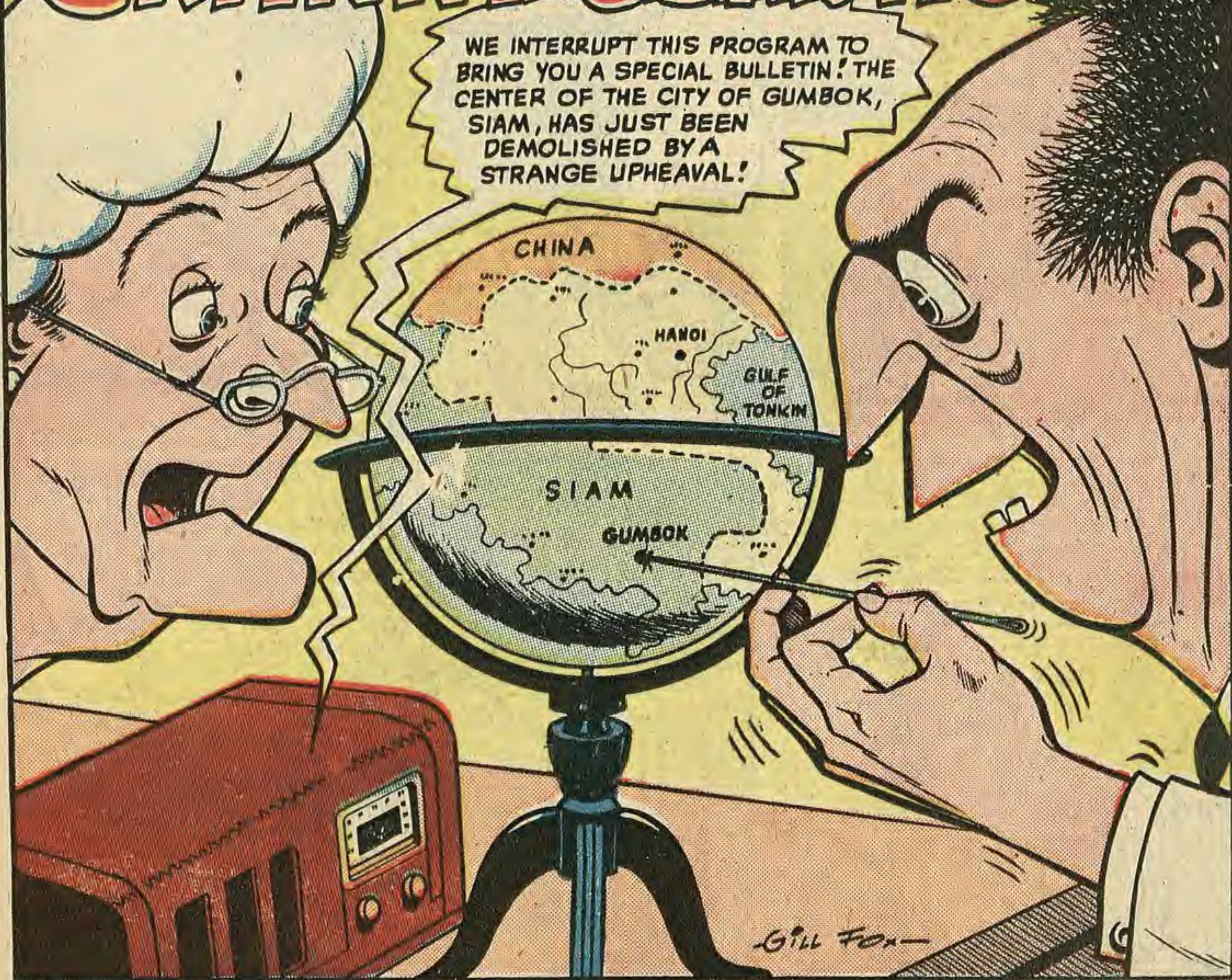
GARAHOOO!

PIPE DOWN, SINBAD, 'TIL WE SEE WHAT THE DOC SAYS ABOUT ALL THESE ADVENTURES O'YOURS!



GRANNY GUMSHOE

WE INTERRUPT THIS PROGRAM TO BRING YOU A SPECIAL BULLETIN! THE CENTER OF THE CITY OF GUMBOK, SIAM, HAS JUST BEEN DEMOLISHED BY A STRANGE UPHEAVAL!



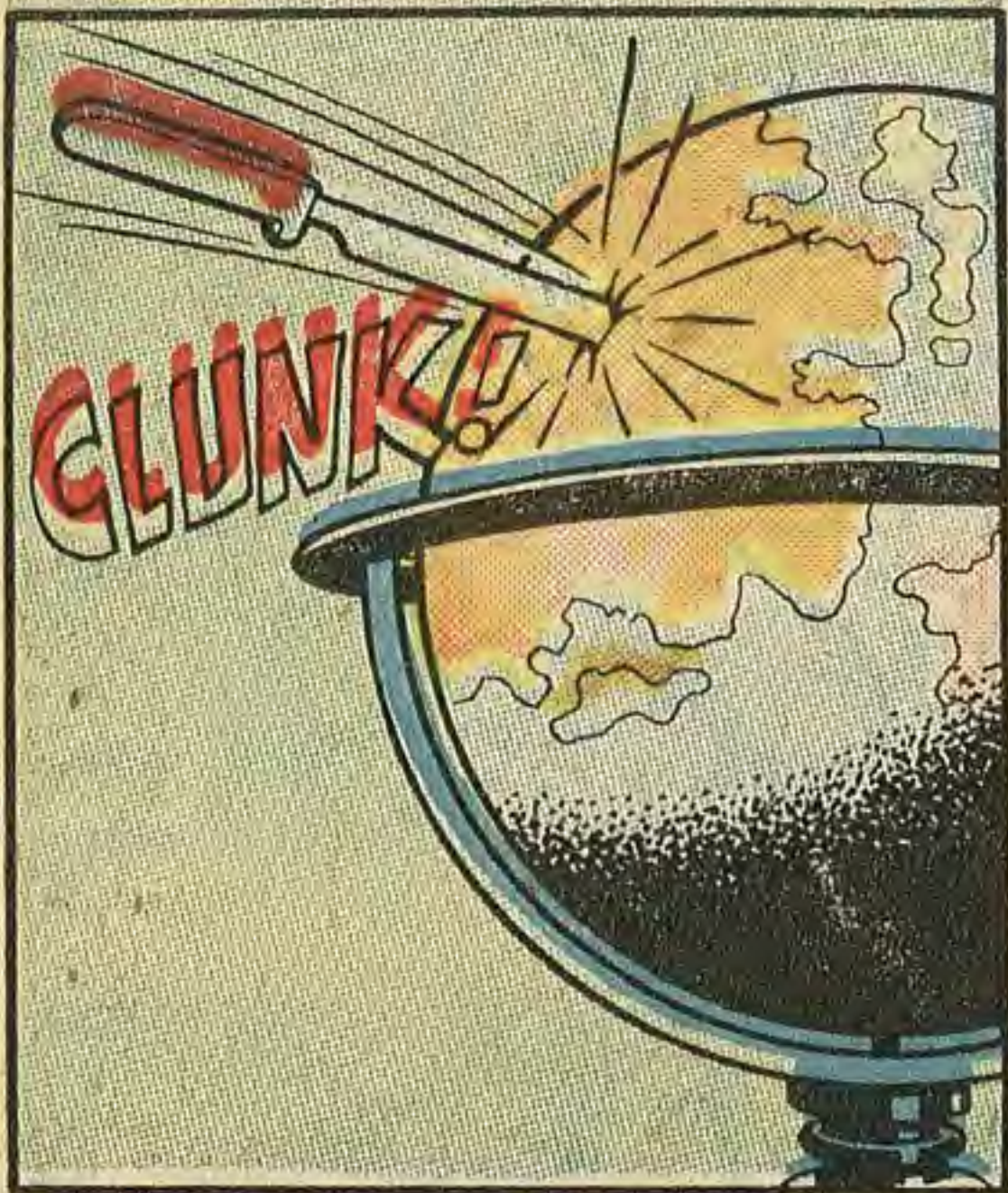
Once again our quaint little old crime-fighter, Granny Gumshoe, becomes involved in a weird case! To begin our story, we look in on Ludwig Cymbal, a warped writer of classical music, in Granny's home town of Weston...

SO! MR. ACOUSTIC HAS REJECTED MY SYMPHONY! HE'S THE THIRD PUBLISHER TO TURN IT DOWN!



...BUT I'LL FIND A WAY TO GET EVEN! BAH!





WE BRING YOU A SPECIAL BULLETIN! THE MAIN STREET OF WINDY CITY HAS JUST BEEN SPLIT OPEN BY A FREAK EARTHQUAKE! THIS IS THE FIRST EARTHQUAKE EVER EXPERIENCED IN WINDY CITY!



HMM...MAYBE THIS WORLD GLOBE HAS SOME SUPERNATURAL POWER OVER NATURE! IF THAT'S TRUE, I CAN USE IT TO GET REVENGE ON THOSE MUSIC PUBLISHERS!



Several days later, Granny visits her friend Mr. Acoustic...

DO YOU EVER HAVE ANY TROUBLE WITH CRACKPOT MUSIC WRITERS, MR. ACOUSTIC?



DO I? HAW! LISTEN TO THIS LETTER... "MR. ACOUSTIC, YOU'VE HAD A CHANCE TO BUY MY NEW SYMPHONY, BUT YOU REFUSED! NOW YOU SHALL DIE! ROCKS WILL DROP FROM THE HEAVENS AS YOU WALK TO LUNCH TODAY!" SIGNED, LUDWIG CYMBAL!

IF I HAD TO WORRY ABOUT EVERY SCREWBALL THREAT I GET, I'D BE A SCREWBALL MYSELF! LET'S GO TO LUNCH, GRANNY!

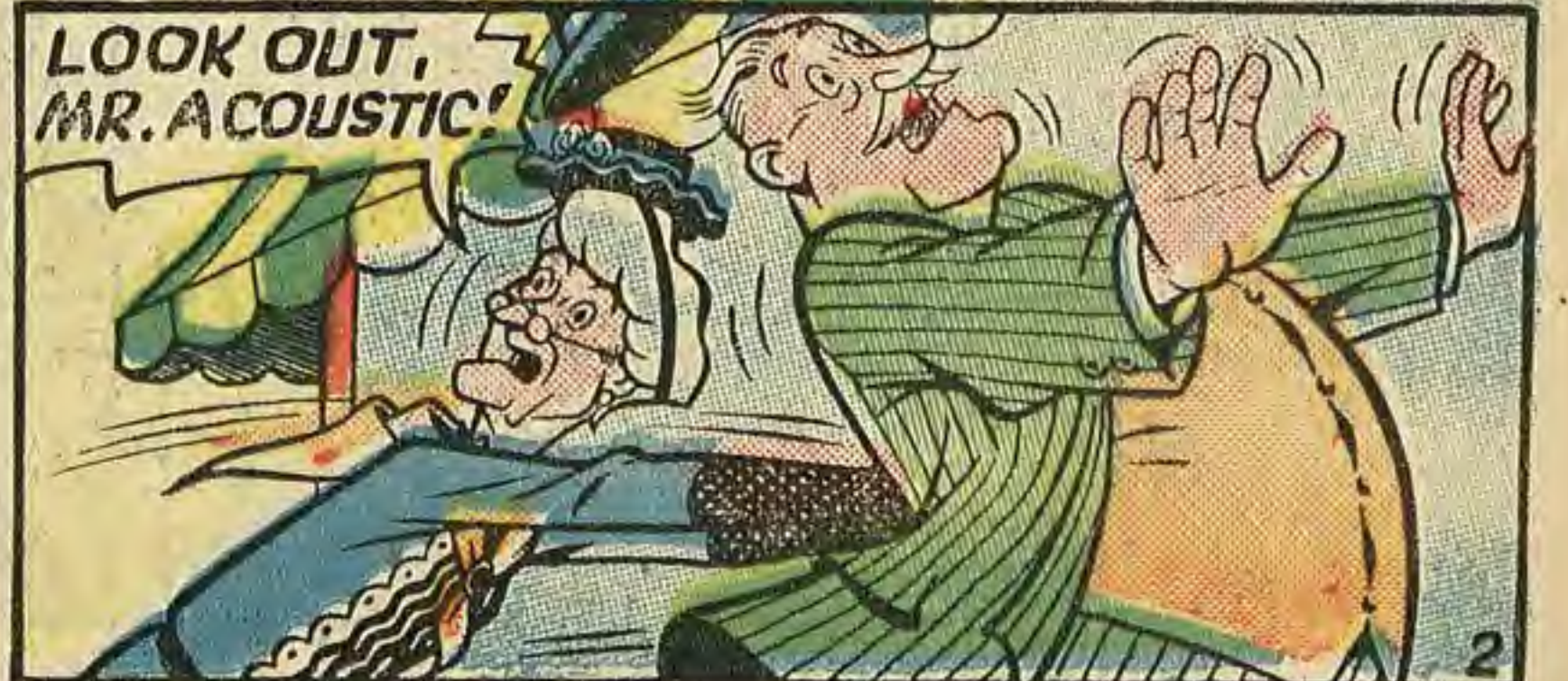
HEE! HEE!

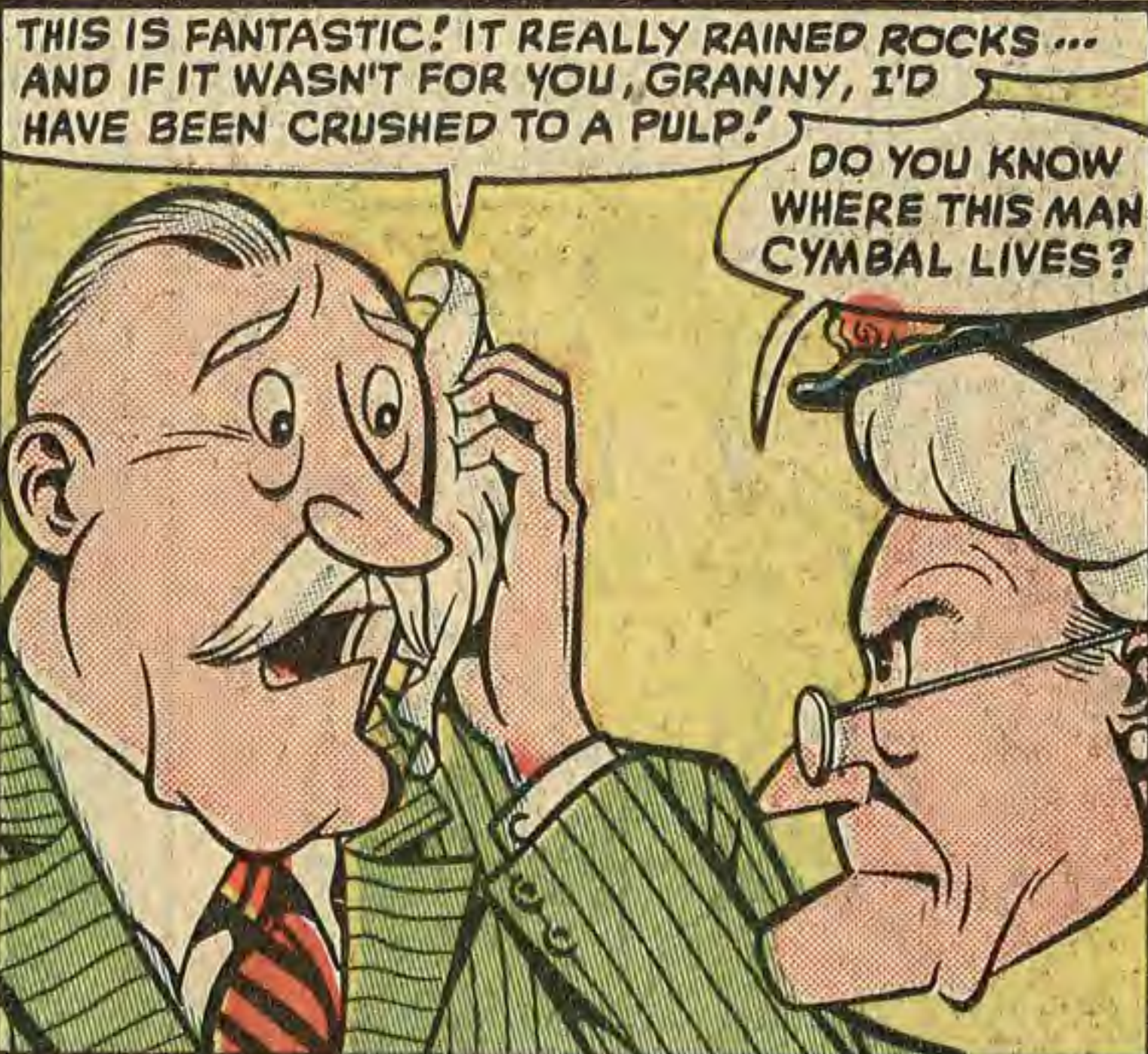
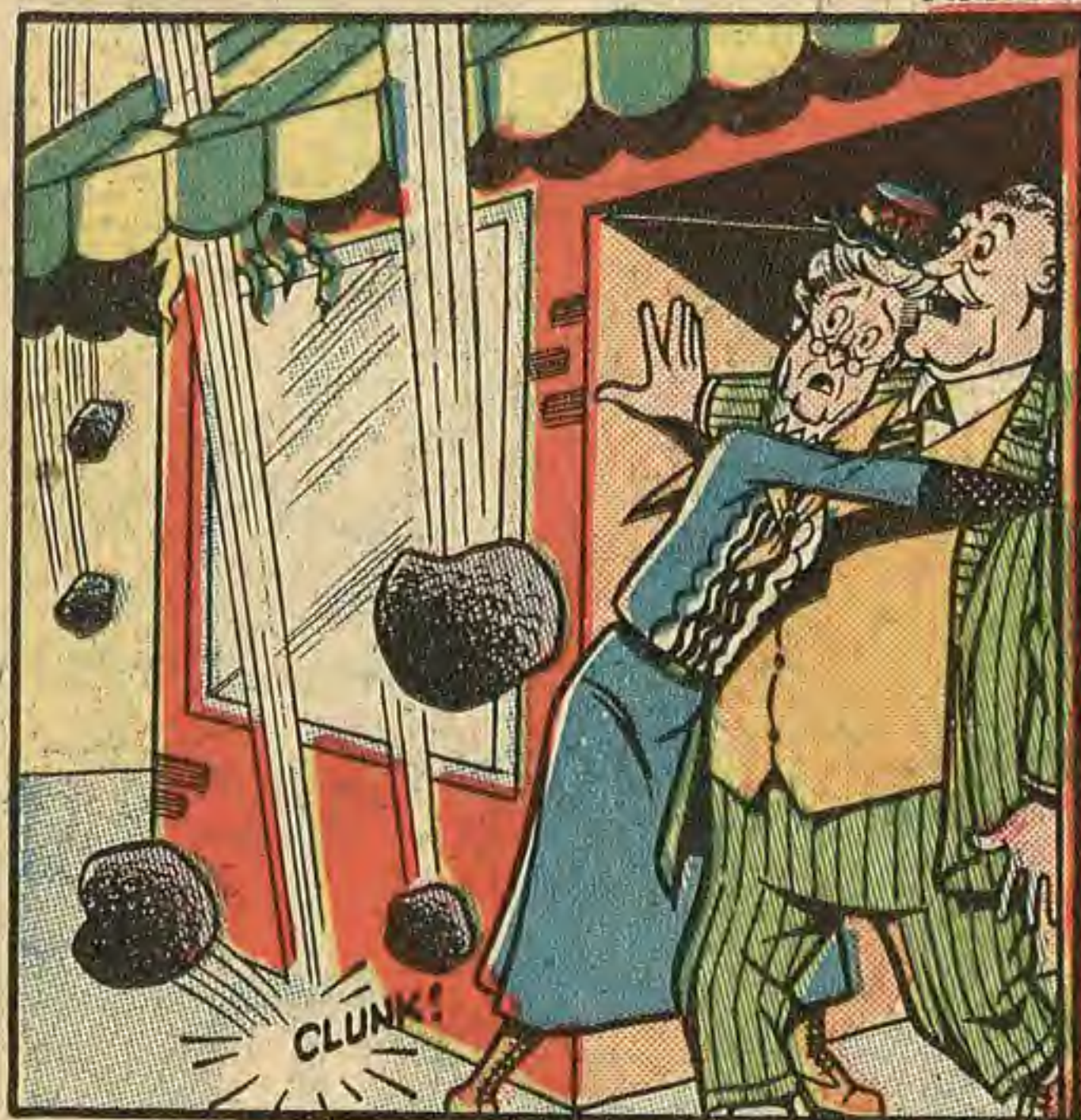


Meanwhile, in Cymbal's study...

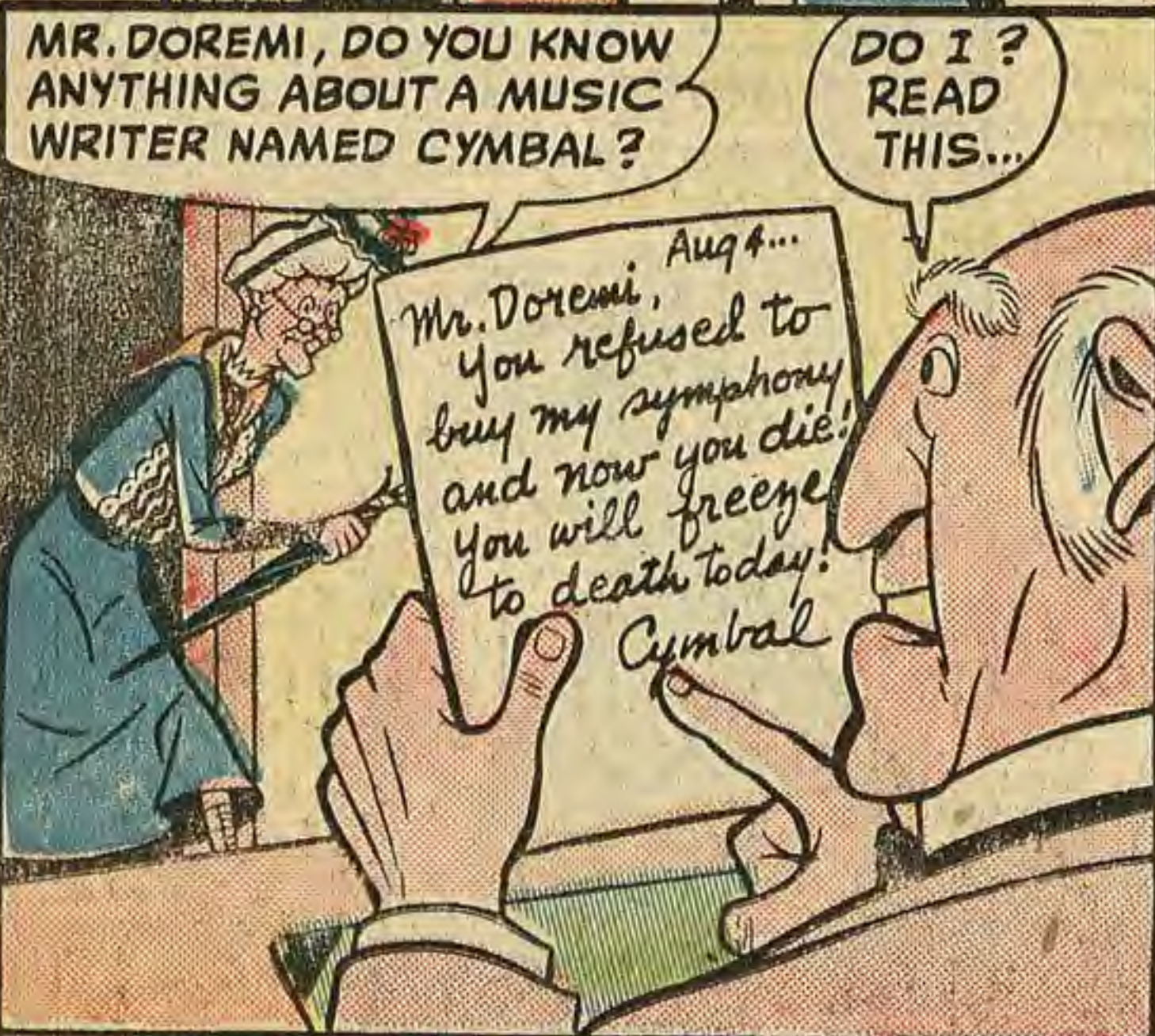
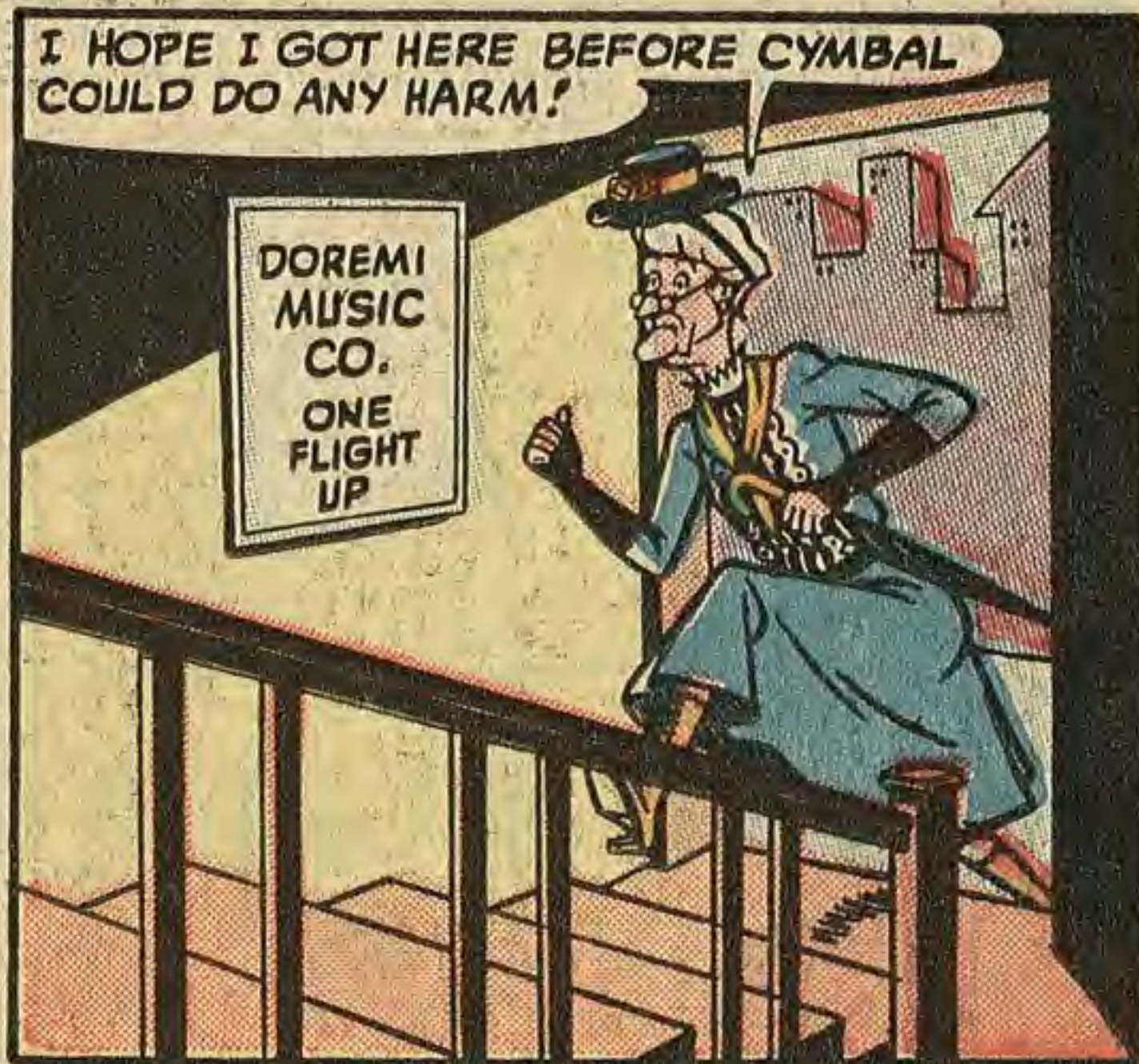


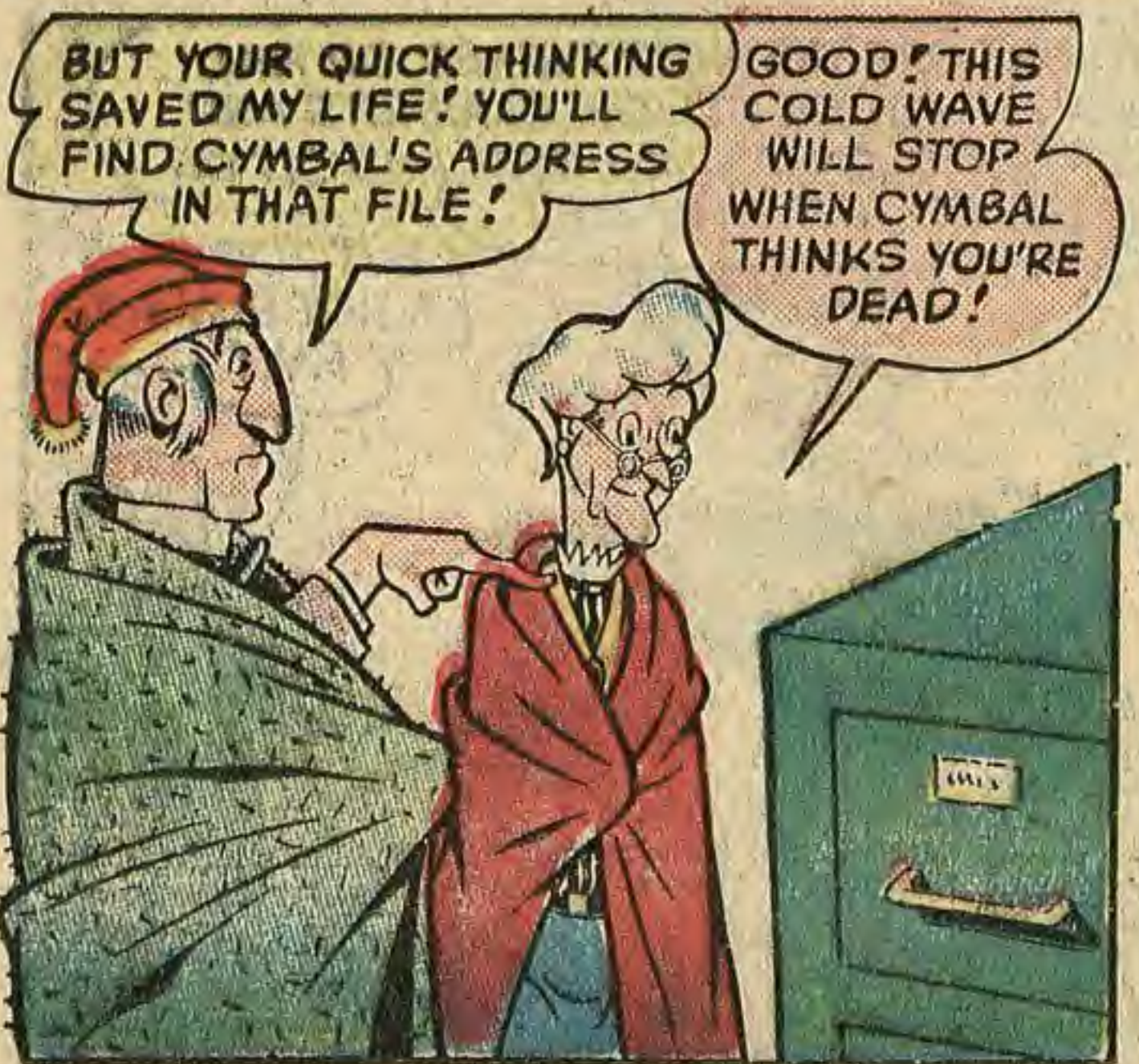
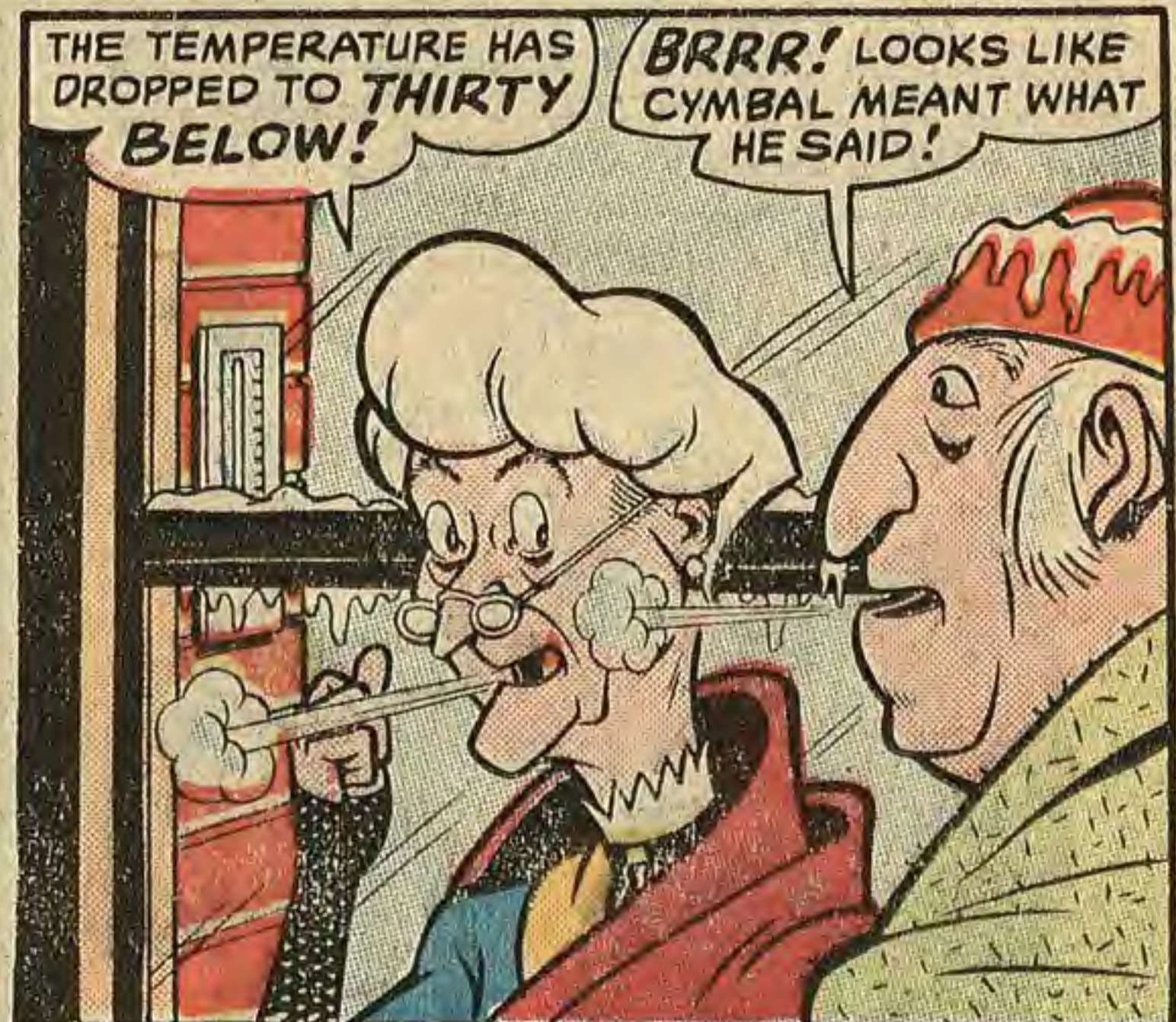
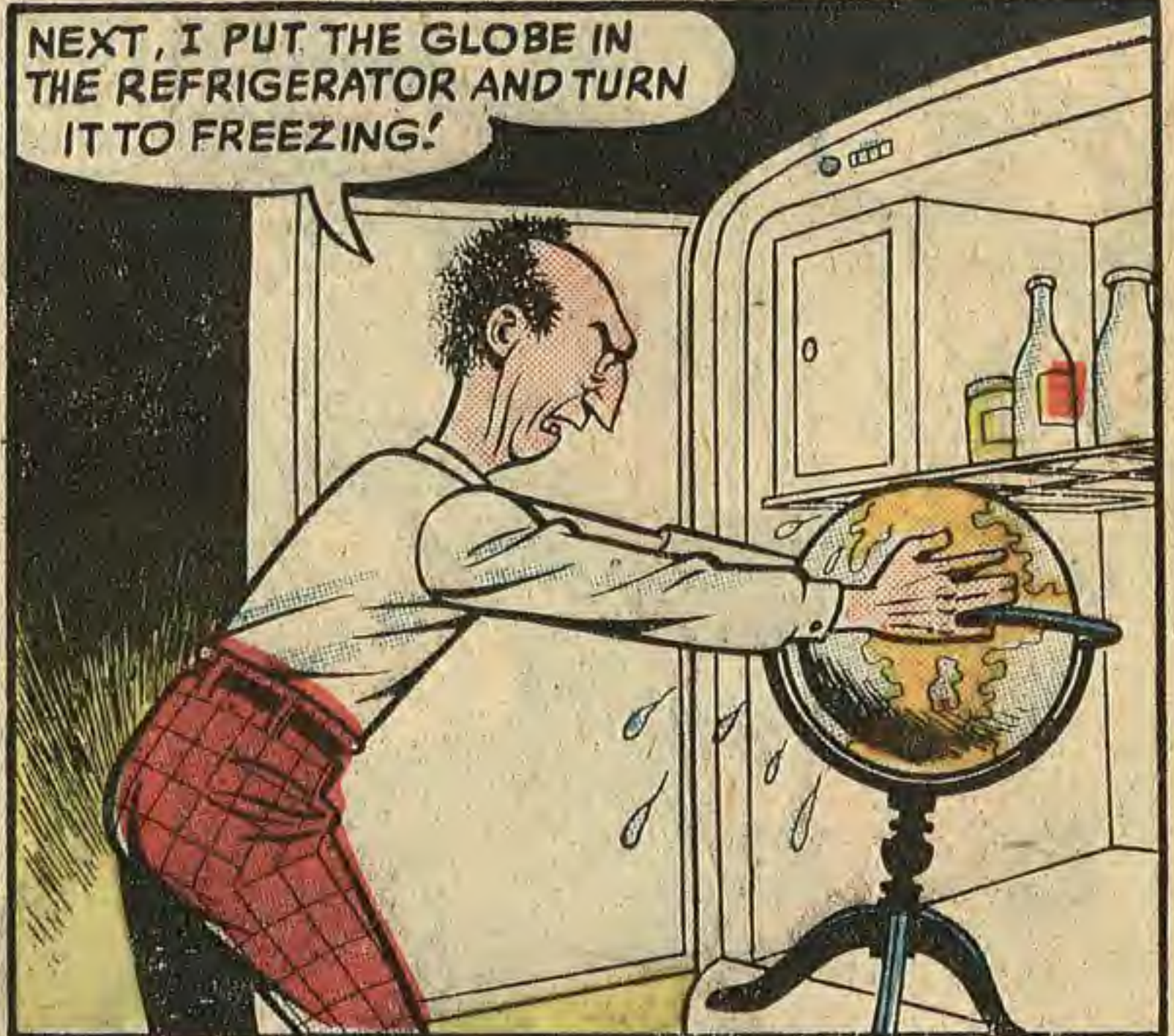
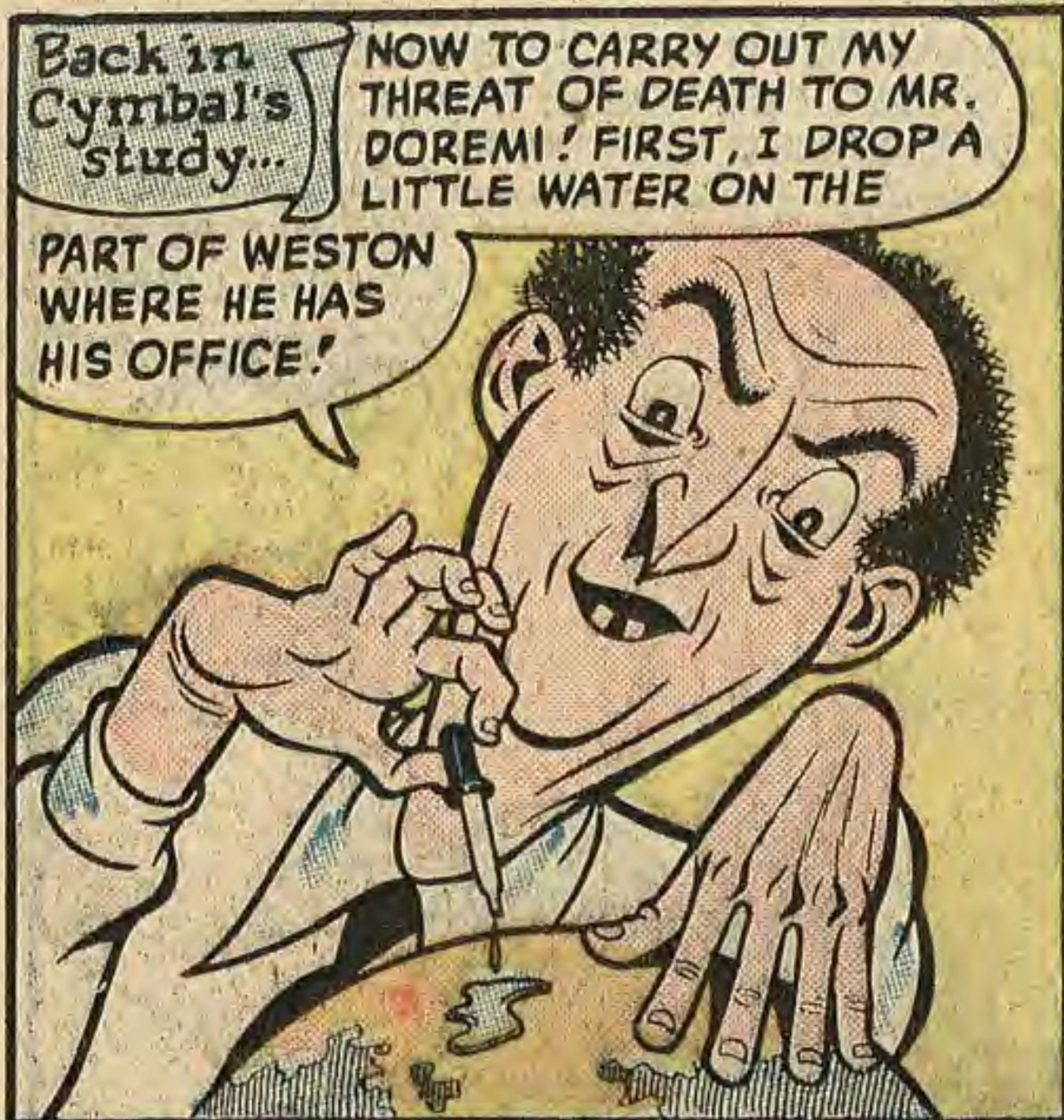
LOOK OUT, MR. ACOUSTIC!





NO, I NEVER TOOK HIM SERIOUSLY! BUT MR. DOREMI, THE TOP MUSIC PUBLISHER, MAY HAVE HIS NAME ON FILE!





A few minutes later, we find Granny at the door to Cymbal's apartment...



I'M NOT SATISFIED WITH MY REVENGE ON THE PUBLISHERS WHO WOULDN'T BUY MY SYMPHONY! I MUST PURGE THE WORLD SO THAT I CAN START ANEW WITH MY MUSIC!



AND I'LL DO THAT BY DROPPING ACID ON MY LITTLE WORLD! I'VE PROTECTED MY SECTION OF WESTON BY PUTTING A LITTLE ACID-RESISTANT LEAD CAP OVER IT!

I'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!



JUST A MINUTE, MR. CYMBAL!

HUH?



NOTHING MUST STOP ME NOW! GRUNT!

HAH! I JUST HOOKED YOU IN TIME!



IF YOU MAKE ONE MORE MOVE TOWARD THAT GLOBE, I'LL MELT THAT LEAD CAP AND DELUGE THIS NEIGHBORHOOD WITH MOLTEN LEAD!

NO! NO! I GIVE UP!

CLICK!



LOOKS LIKE THE ONLY ORCHESTRA THAT WILL EVER PLAY YOUR PHONY SYMPHONY WILL BE A PRISON BAND!

POLICE SERGEANT



Sally O'Neil

Policewoman Sally O'Neil
faces the villainy of
SLIT-EYES,
as she solves the
mystery of the
**RICH RAG
DOLL**
murders!



WE'D BETTER GO
IN, SALLY! JUDY
AND I WERE JUST
TAKING A WALK
BEFORE HER
BEDTIME!

YES, MRS.
REESE, IT'S
ALMOST SEVEN-
THIRTY! JUDY
MUST GET TO
BED, AND I MUST
GET HOME! I'M
REALLY TIRED!

MY! THAT MAN
SEEMS TO BE
IN A BIG
HURRY!

HE'S
BREAKING
ALL SPEED
RECORDS, IF
YOU ASK ME!

PUFF-PUFF! HELLO,
PRETTY LITTLE GIRL!
HERE'S A DOLL FOR
YOU!

ER...
THANKS!
BUT...





HOW PECULIAR!
I NEVER SAW THE
MAN BEFORE!
WHAT DO YOU
SUPPOSE...

HE ACTED
FRIGHTENED,
AS IF HE'S IN
TROUBLE!



ARRGH!

RAT-
TAT-
TAT!



FRISK HIM,
GIMPY, AND
MAKE IT
SNAPPY!

YEAH, SLUG!
HE MUST HAVE
THE STUFF ON
HIM!



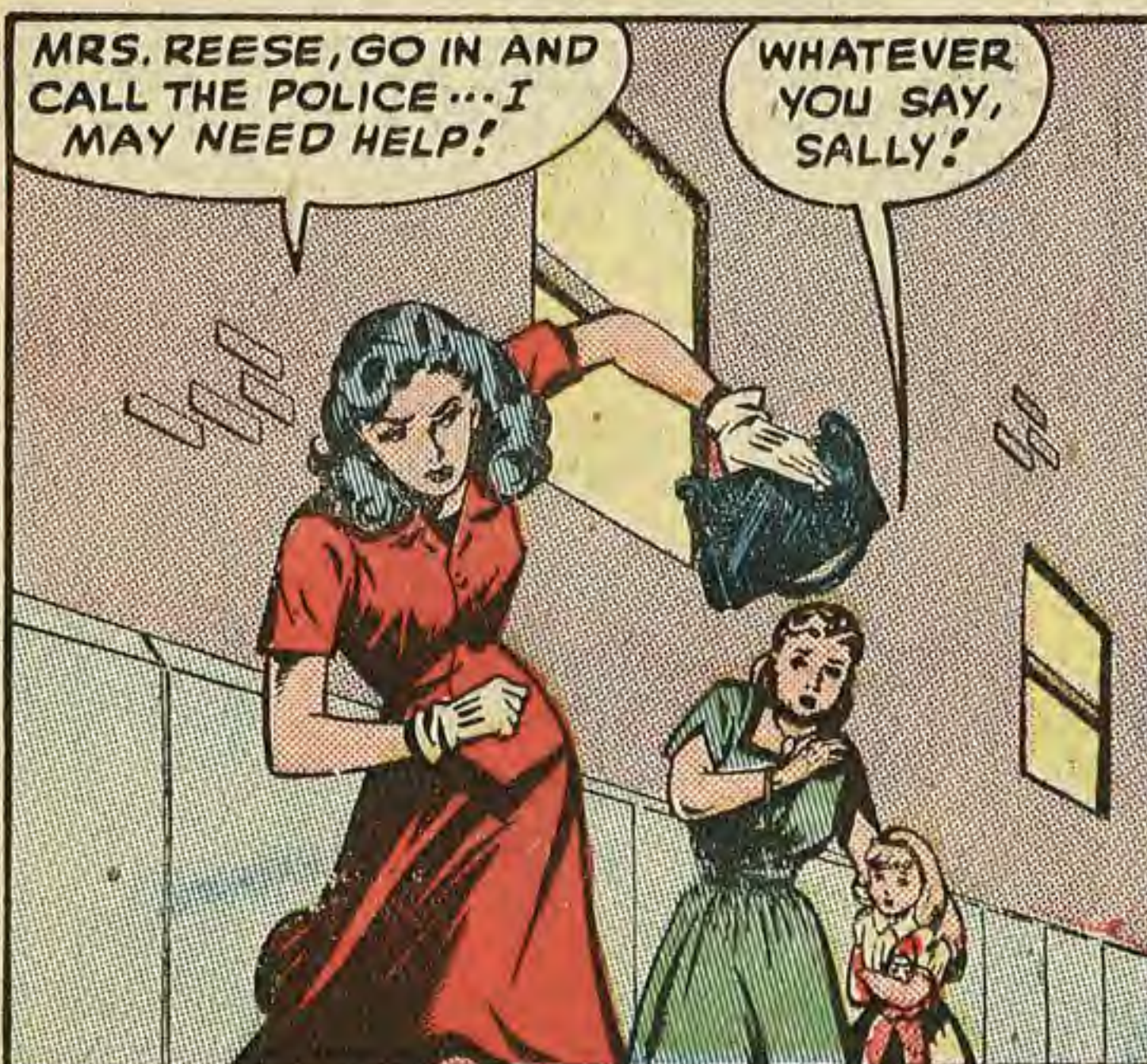
I CAN'T FIND A THING!
BUT, IF HE DIDN'T HAVE
IT, WHY DID HE RUN?



Meanwhile...
RAT-TAT-TAT!

SALLY,
WHAT...

IT'S TROUBLE, ALL RIGHT...
SPELLED WITH A MACHINE
GUN! AND RIGHT AFTER
WE SAW THAT RED-HEADED
MAN RUNNING, TOO!
THERE COULD BE
A CONNECTION!



MRS. REESE, GO IN AND
CALL THE POLICE... I
MAY NEED HELP!

WHATEVER
YOU SAY,
SALLY!



I WONDER
IF THE DOLL
HAS ANYTHING
TO DO WITH
IT?

WAIT! I'D BETTER TAKE
THAT DOLL! I DON'T
WANT ANYTHING TO
HAPPEN TO JUDY!

WAAAH!



THERE'S NOTHING ON HIM, SLUG, AND HE'S DEAD! NOW WHAT'LL WE DO?

FORGET IT! LET'S SCRAM BEFORE SOMEBODY COMES ALONG!



IT'S THE RED-HEAD, ALL RIGHT! AND I'VE GOT TO CORNER HIS KILLERS! BUT HOW? A DOLL'S NOT MUCH DEFENSE AGAINST A MACHINE GUN!



THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO KEEP FROM LOSING SIGHT OF THEM, AND THAT'S TO HITCH A RIDE!

SLIT-EYE IS GONNA BE PLENTY SORE WHEN HE HEARS WHAT HAPPENED!



I'M GLAD IT'S DARK! IT MUST LOOK SILLY TO SEE A GROWN WOMAN AND A RAG DOLL SITTING ON A REAR BUMPER!



GUESS WE MIGHT AS WELL TELL SLIT-EYE THE WHOLE STORY AND GET IT OVER WITH!



I WANT TO HEAR THAT STORY, BUT I'D BETTER WATCH MY STEP! I'M TOO FAR OUT OF TOWN TO EXPECT ANY HELP!

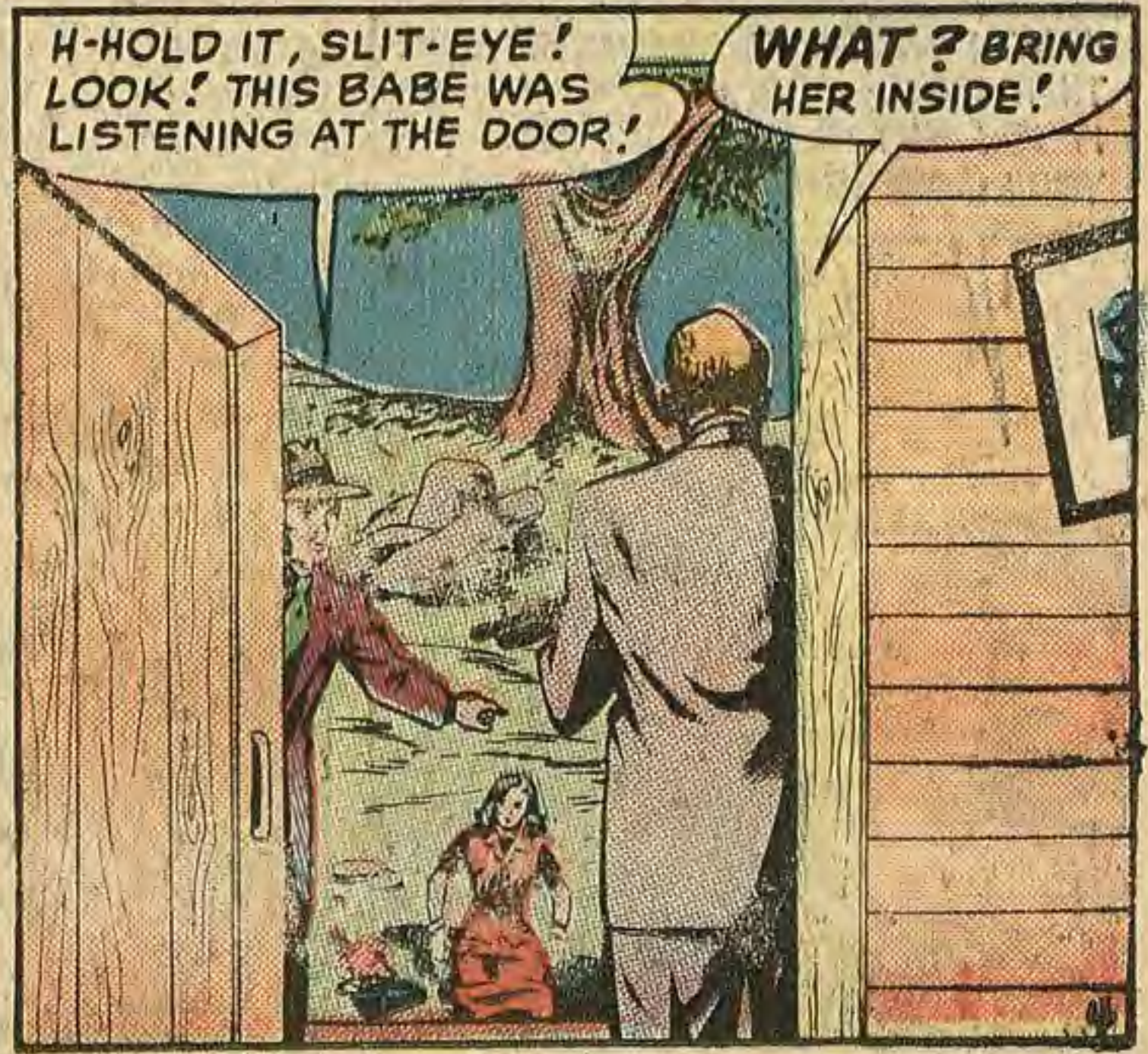


WELL, WHERE'S THE MONEY? LET'S HAVE IT!

WE DIDN'T GET IT, SLIT-EYE! RED HELD OUT ON US!



AFTER I WAS SO KIND AS TO LET HIM DO THAT DINK JOB LAST NIGHT, HE TRIES TO PULL A FAST ONE AND CUT US OUT OF OUR SHARE, EH? WAIT'LL I GET MY LOOKS ON THAT GUY!





IF I TELL YOU, I MAY BE DOUBLE-CROSSED! WHY DON'T YOU HELP GIMPY GET RID OF SLUG'S BODY... THEN WE'LL ALL BE FREE TO COLLECT THE DOUGH TOGETHER!

SAY! YOU'RE A SHREWD LITTLE OPERATOR! HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE MY PARTNER?

I WOULDN'T LIKE IT! POLICEWOMEN AREN'T AROUND TO BE PARTNERS TO CRIME! GET YOUR HANDS UP, BOTH OF YOU!

POLICEWOMAN, HUH? WHY, YOU DOUBLE-CROSSING LITTLE DOLL! I'LL...

SPEAKING OF DOLLS, I'D STILL LIKE TO TAKE THIS ONE TO MY LITTLE FRIEND! PICK IT UP, GIMPY, THEN MARCH TO THE CAR... BOTH OF YOU!

S-SURE!

Soon... SALLY, WE GOT MRS. REEVES' CALL AND FOUND A BODY AROUND THE CORNER FROM HER APARTMENT! BUT WE'VE BEEN WORRIED ABOUT YOU!

I'LL BET YOU HAVEN'T BEEN AS WORRIED AS I HAVE! TAKE OVER, MIKE! I'M EXHAUSTED!

BEFORE YOU TAKE THEM AWAY, LET'S SEE IF I GUESSED RIGHT ABOUT WHERE THE MONEY WAS HIDDEN!

I ALWAYS SAID... NEVER TRUST A DOLL!

SALLY, COME INTO MY OFFICE! YOU DID A... WHAT'S THIS? A DOLL STUFFED WITH MONEY!

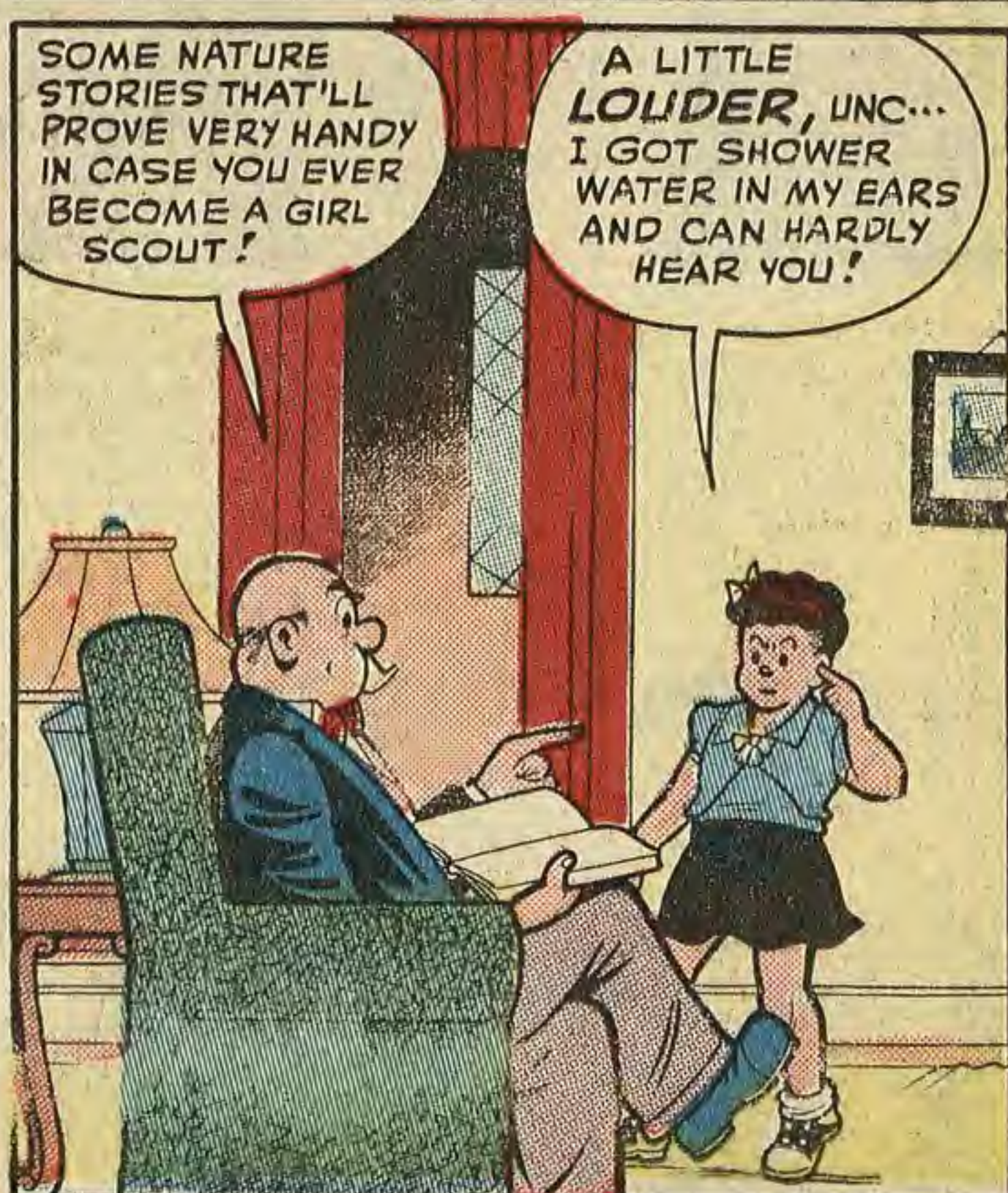
YES, CHIEF! THIS IS PROBABLY THE RICHEST RAG DOLL IN THE WORLD, BUT RIGHT NOW I'M EVEN MORE RAGGED!

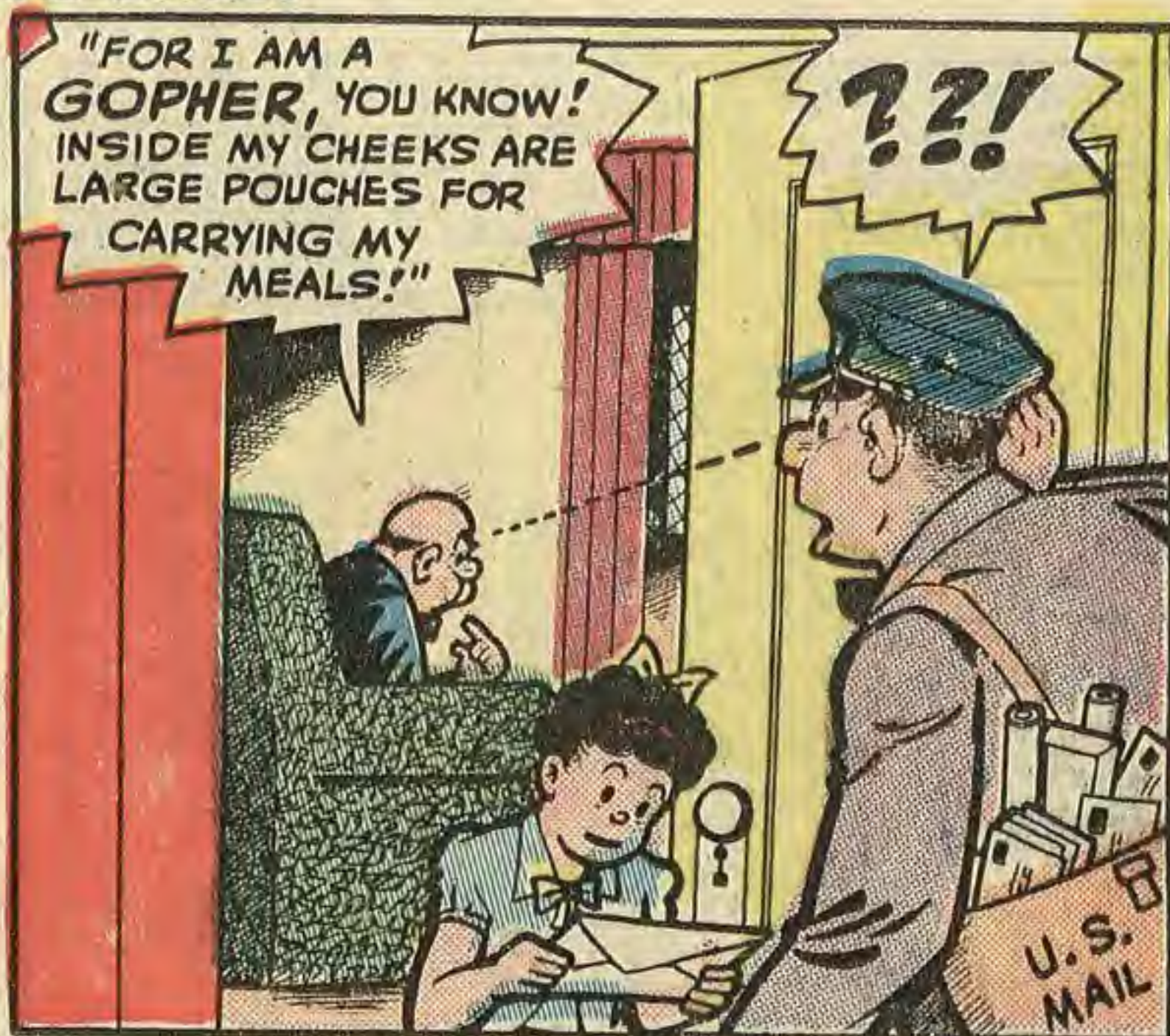
A GREAT PIECE OF WORK, SALLY! YOU SEWED UP THE CASE ALONE!

IT'S NOT SEWED UP YET, CHIEF! I HAVE A NEEDLE AND THREAD, BUT IS THERE ANY COTTON AROUND HERE? I WANT TO STUFF THIS RAG DOLL WITH SOMETHING LESS VALUABLE, AND DELIVER IT TO A LITTLE GIRL NAMED JUDY!

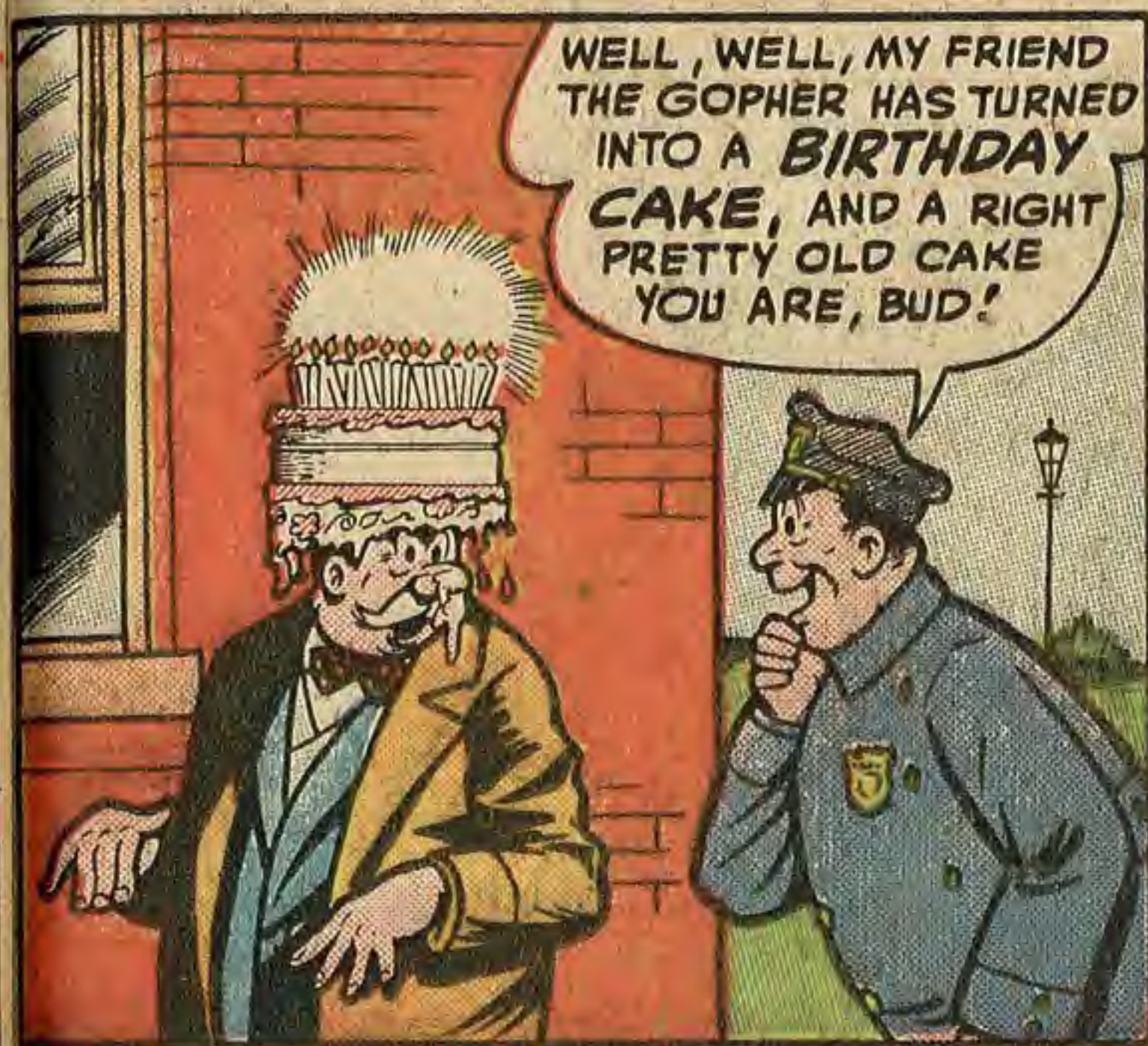


LASSIE









Quicksilver



QUICKSILVER
follows the
MAN from the
MOON to his
mansion in the sky!



HELLO,
COMMISSIONER!
HAVE YOU FOUND
ANY TRACE OF
MOONY MASTERS?

NONE, QUICK-
SILVER! WE'VE
GIVEN UP THE
SEARCH!
HE PULLED
A ONE-MAN
CRIME WAVE
AND THEN
DISAPPEARED!



IT'S TOO BAD WHEN
A BRILLIANT INVENTOR
TURNS TO CRIME! THAT'S
A STUPID COURSE FOR
A SMART MAN TO
TAKE!

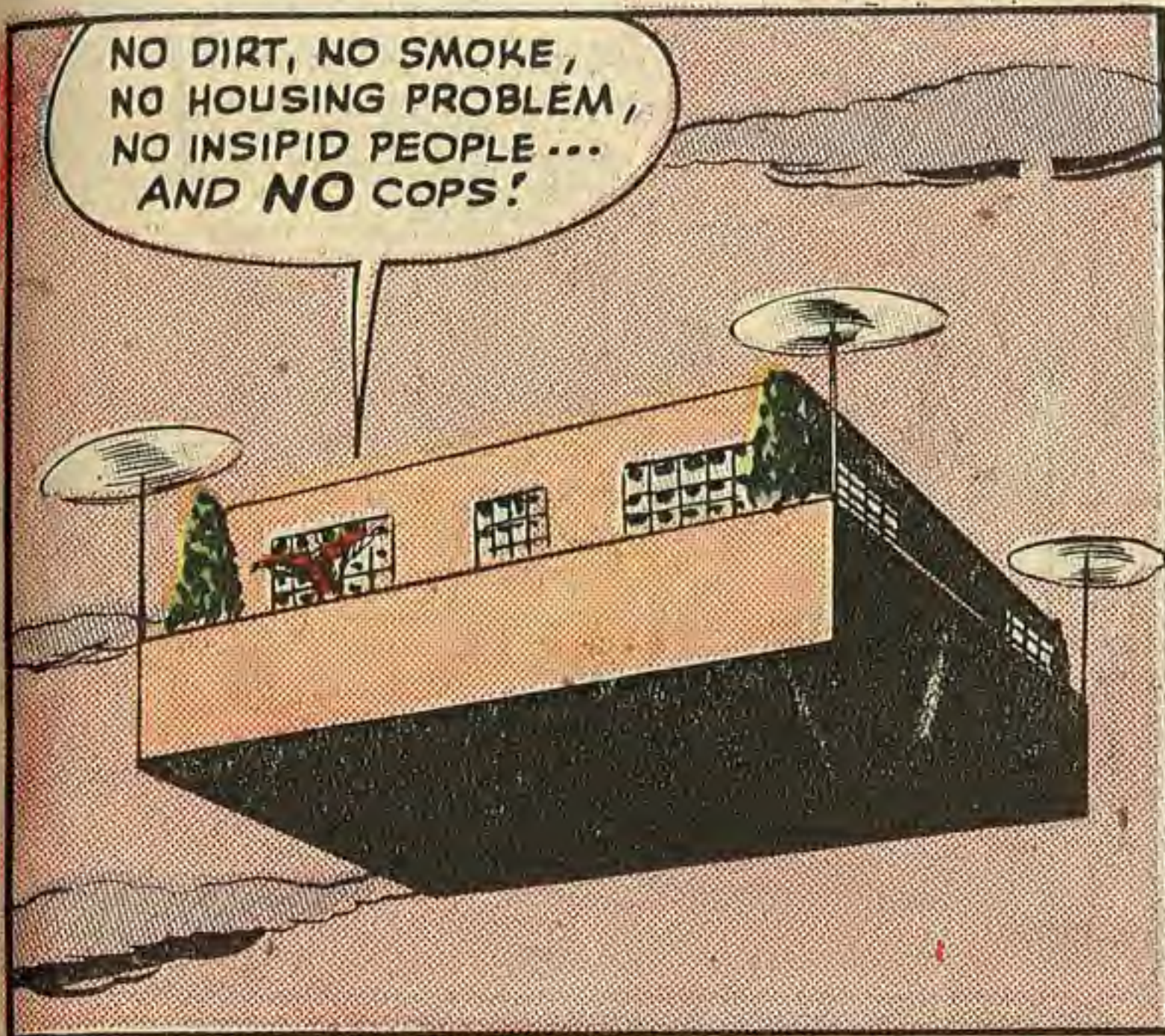
HE
WAS
DUMB
ENOUGH

TO LEAVE HIS FINGER-
PRINTS AROUND, BUT
CLEVER ENOUGH TO
EVADE THE LAW AND
VANISH INTO THIN
AIR!



Meanwhile, high above the
city...

AH, THIN AIR! THERE'S
NOTHING SO INVIGORATING, OR AS
SAFE, AS BEING HIGH UP IN THE
SKY!





In the weeks that follow...

MAN FROM THE MOON STRIKES AGAIN! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

"FORTIETH-STORY APARTMENT ROBBED OF FOOD AND CLOTHING! JEWELS UNTOUCHED!" IT DOESN'T SEEM TO MAKE SENSE!



HMM! ALL THE NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS ARE THE SAME! HE ROBS ONLY **HIGH** PLACES...TAKES FOOD, CLOTHING OR FUNCTIONAL EQUIPMENT! STRIKES AT NIGHT WHEN THE MOON IS...

THERE'S AN ANGLE I HADN'T THOUGHT OF!



IT'S ALWAYS BEEN A MOONLIT NIGHT, BUT THE SKY HAS BECOME OVERCAST AND CLOUDY EVERY TIME HE'S MADE AN APPEARANCE! I WONDER IF THAT COULD ONLY BE A COINCIDENCE!



THE MOON IS BRIGHT TONIGHT, ALL RIGHT! IT MAY BE A WASTE OF TIME, BUT I'M GOING TO VISIT THE SKYSCRAPER APARTMENT BUILDING! THAT'S THE HIGHEST SPOT IN TOWN!

THERE'S QUICK-SILVER! I'M

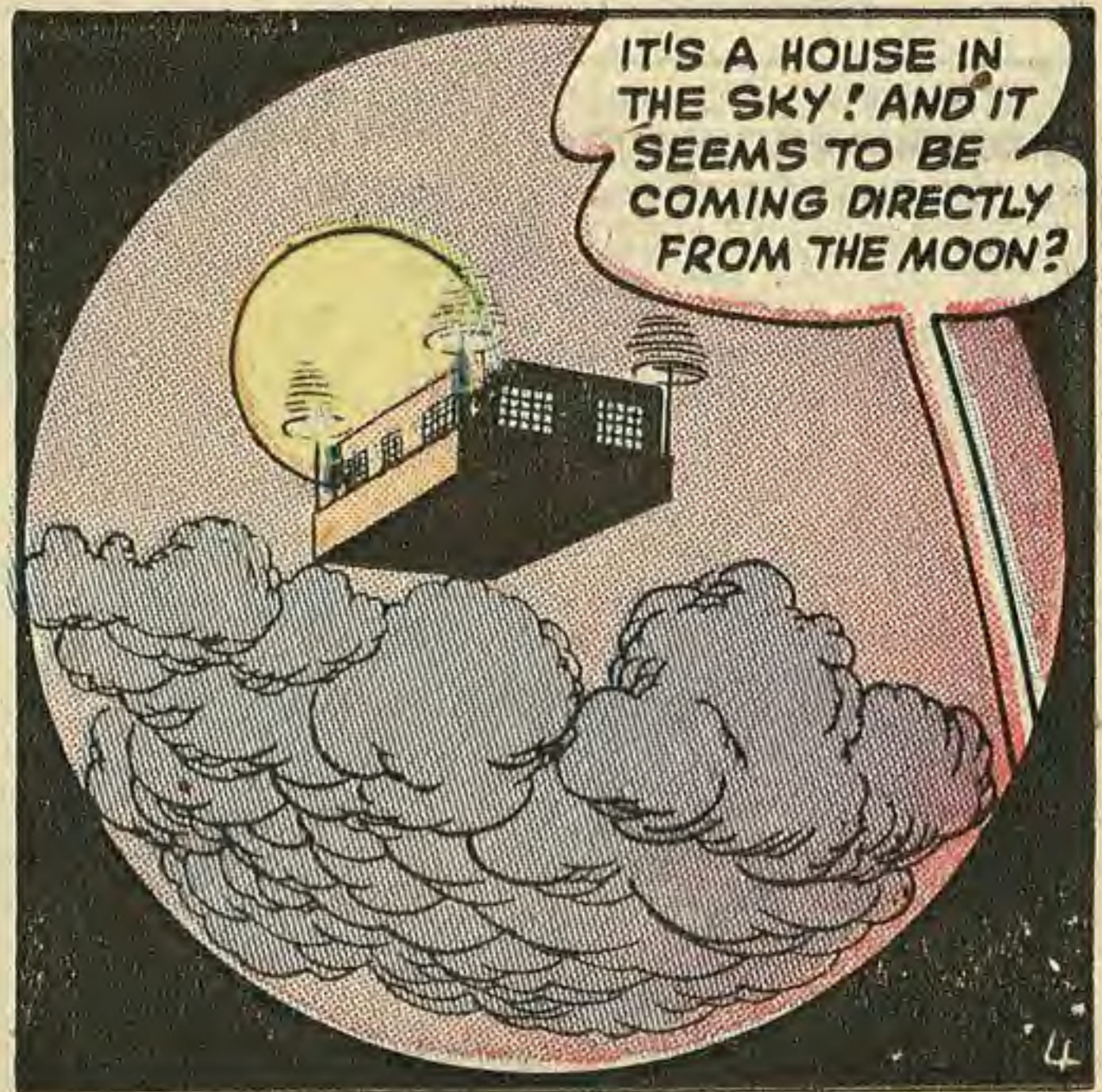
SURPRISED HE HASN'T FOUND THE MOON MAN! IF ANYONE COULD DO IT, HE'D BE THE ONE!



WHAT'S THIS! HAVE I SUDDENLY GONE MOON MAD, OR IS WHAT I SEE REALLY THERE?



IT'S A HOUSE IN THE SKY! AND IT SEEMS TO BE COMING DIRECTLY FROM THE MOON?





IT'S INCREDIBLE! A STRANGE-LOOKING FIGURE... SPRAYING VAPOR TO FORM THESE CLOUDS! I HOPE THEY DON'T CUT OFF MY VIEW!



I'LL VISIT THE SKYSCRAPER APARTMENTS TONIGHT! I SAVED THE TALLEST FOR THE LAST!

THIS PLANE, OR WHATEVER IT IS, IS BEING ANCHORED HERE! I'M IN LUCK!



WHAT A WEIRD CREATURE! NO WONDER PEOPLE HAVE DIED FROM SHOCK AT SEEING HIM!

HA, HA, HA! THE DREAMY LITTLE MAN THEY LAUGHED AT CAUSES FEAR AND PANIC!

THE MAN IN THE MOON CAME TUMBLING DOWN, TO... "QUICK-SILVER!"

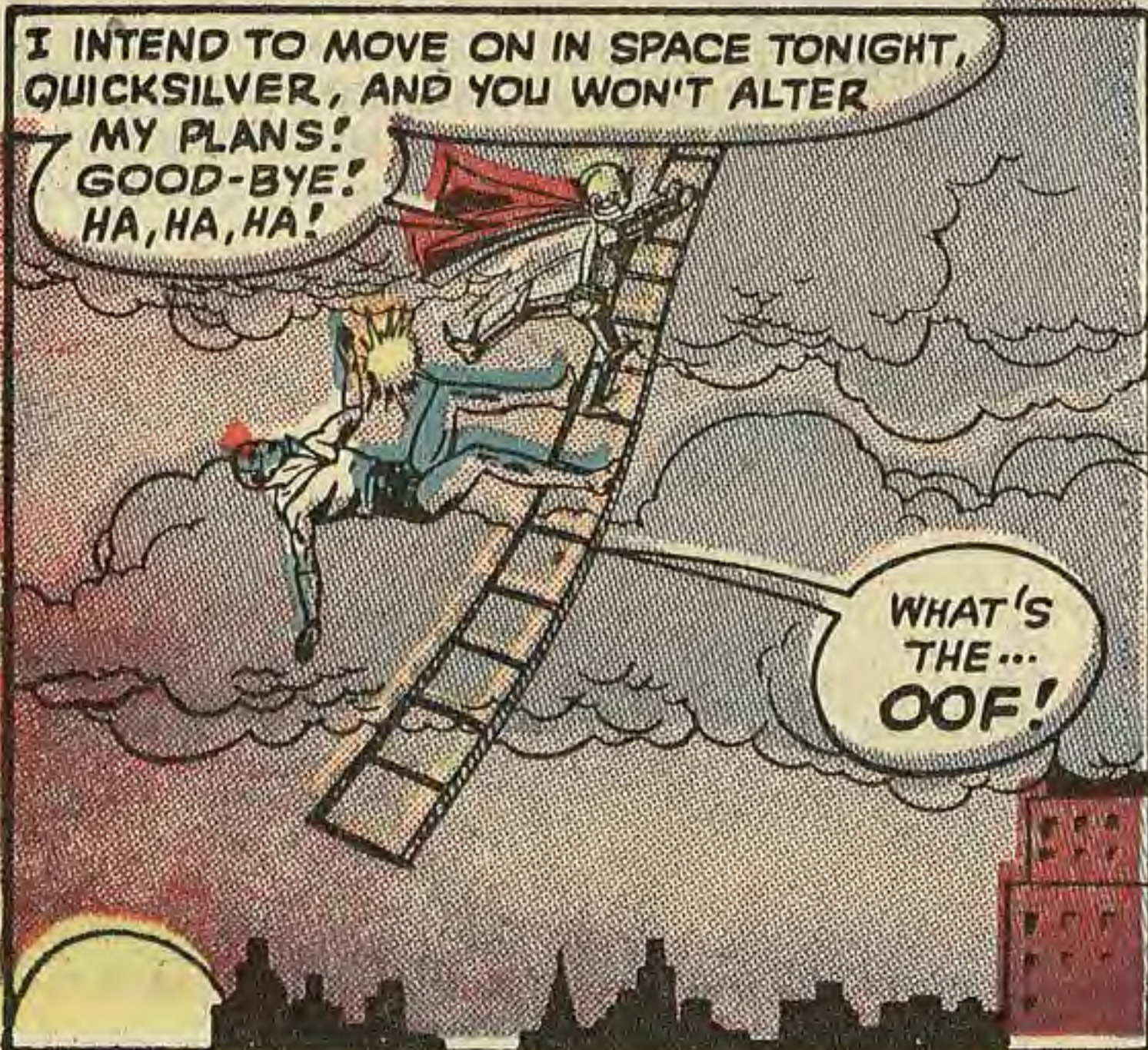


THAT OLD NURSERY RHYME IS VERY APPROPRIATE! YOU'LL TAKE A TUMBLE, ALL RIGHT!



YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S DUE FOR A FALL ... CLEAR TO THE GROUND IF YOU TRY TO FOLLOW ME!

HOW IN-HOSPITABLE OF YOU! I INSIST UPON SEEING YOUR MANSION IN THE SKY!



I INTEND TO MOVE ON IN SPACE TONIGHT, QUICKSILVER, AND YOU WON'T ALTER MY PLANS! GOOD-BYE! HA, HA, HA!

WHAT'S THE... OOF!



THAT WAS A CLOSE CALL! IT'S A GOOD THING I WAS ONCE AN ACROBAT!

QUICKSILVER! I--I PUSHED YOU TO YOUR DEATH! YOU'RE GONE... OR AM I SEEING THINGS?

YOU'LL SOON BE SEEING THINGS! THE ECLIPSE OF THE MOON MAN!



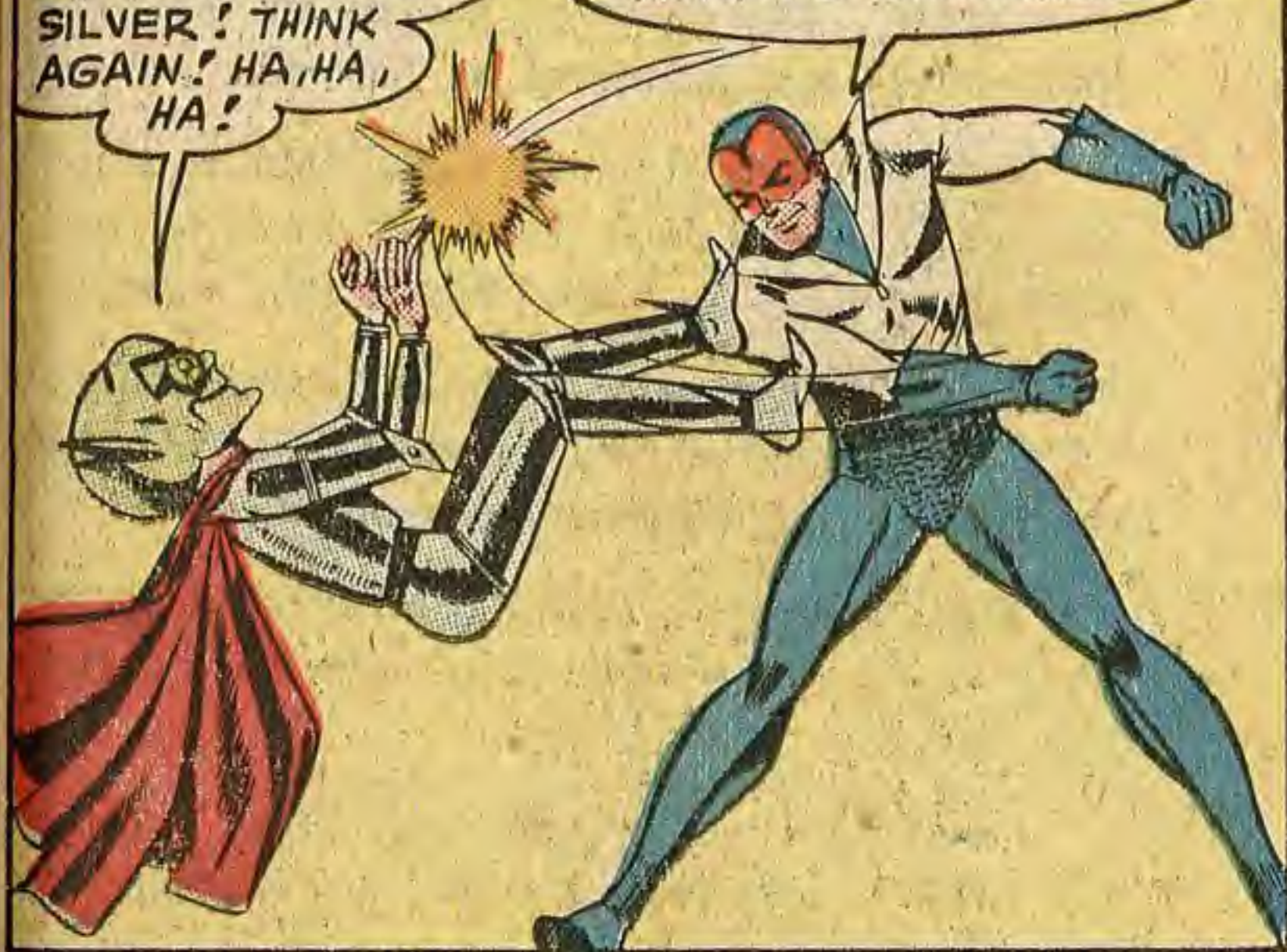
WHAT CAN YOU DO? I HAVE ON A BULLET-PROOF VEST AND HELMET! GUNS WON'T HARM ME!

THEN YOU ARE A NORMAL HUMAN BEING UNDER THAT FRIGHTFUL EXTERIOR! THANKS FOR TELLING ME! BUT I DON'T USE GUNS... I USE FISTS!



FISTS DON'T FAZE ME EITHER, QUICK-SILVER! THINK AGAIN! HA, HA, HA!

MY NEXT MOVE IS ALWAYS STRATEGIC!



YOU GAVE ME THIS IDEA YOURSELF, MOON MAN! WHAT DO YOU SAY? SHALL I DROP YOU, OR DO YOU PREFER TO COME DOWN TO EARTH QUIETLY?

YOU WIN, QUICK-SILVER! I GIVE UP!



GO INSIDE! I WANT TO SEE THE FLESH BENEATH THE FANTASY! THEN YOU CAN PILOT THIS THING TO THE AIRPORT!

OH, WELL! SIGH! THIS SOON WOULD HAVE BECOME MONOTONOUS, ANYWAY!



MOONY MASTERS! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! THE POLICE COMMISSIONER WILL BE GLAD TO SEE YOU!

I GUESS EVEN A SMART PERSON LIKE ME CAN'T OUTWIT THE LAW... SO, WELL...THERE'S NOTHING LEFT BUT TO GO DOWN AND FACE THE MUSIC!



Later...

MASTERS HAS CERTAINLY PROVED HE'S A GENIUS WHO CAN'T ACCEPT SOCIETY! BUT HE WON'T HAVE TO IN A SOLITARY CELL!

SO ENDS OUR SEARCH FOR MOONY MASTERS! AS YOU ONCE SAID, COMMISSIONER, HE VANISHED INTO THIN AIR... BUT NOW HE'S RETURNED AS THE MAN FROM THE MOON!



Three Strikes for a Jinx

CARNIE CALAHAN traced aimless designs in the sandy circus lot with his barker's cane, musing over the accidents that had befallen the Mammoth Circus in the past week. Ever since they had started on their Western tour, they had been dogged by hard luck. First, Equalo, the usually sure-footed high-wire artist had lost his balance and narrowly escaped serious injuries; then, during another performance, one of the lions had become sulky and picked a fight with a tiger in the act, and Clyde, the trainer, was clawed trying to separate them.

"Circus people are a superstitious lot," the Barker thought, "always figuring accidents are due to jinxes and run in threes."

He looked up as Colonel Lane, the owner of the circus rounded the corner of the freak tent. "As if I didn't have enough on my mind," the Colonel grumbled, "without Blackmeer from United Circus bothering me."

"So he's still after you," Carnie said, "to sell out to his outfit."

"I'll never do it," Colonel Lane vowed warmly, "never."

"With two performers in the hospital and the rest of them jumpy as a lioness with a new litter, I don't know how long we can keep the show going," Carnie warned.

"I know, Carnie," the Colonel sighed, "and Blackmeer knows it, too. All the same, I told him to go to blazes."

"I don't suppose that went over too big," Carnie said drily.

"No," the Colonel replied. "He said the day would come when I'd be glad to sell out to United."

"That sounds like a threat," Carnie said thoughtfully. "You don't suppose he might have something to do with these accidents?"

"How could he?" Colonel Lane asked. "He wasn't anywhere near either of the performers

when they were hurt. No, I guess we'll have to sweat out this jinx like we've done before."

A terrified shriek and a heavy thud, followed by a sob, sent the two men hurrying into the tent. Carnie burst into a dressing room to see the ponderous Lena sitting on the ground, her fleshy face twisted in pain.

"What happened, Lena," Carnie asked worriedly.

"A big rat," the fat woman replied breathlessly, "ran in under the tent and I jumped up on a chair." She gestured heavily at the light chair which lay splintered at her side.

"You should have known better than to think that chair would hold your six hundred and some pounds, Lena," the Colonel said severely.

"I didn't have time to think," Lena sobbed. "I'm frightened of mice and rats, and I did the first thing that came into my mind."

"That's all right, Lena," Carnie said soothingly as the fat woman burst into tears. "Are you hurt?"

"I can't get up," Lena said, "and I think my ankle is sprained, I landed on it when the chair broke."

"Well," the Colonel said unhappily, "there's the third accident of the jinx. I hope it's over with now."

"We'll have the doctor sent over," he promised, "and we'll send some of the roustabouts to help you to bed."

Carnie and Colonel Lane left Lena, her massive ankle swelling to an even greater size. Shali, who had also heard the scream, had come in and was trying to make the unhappy woman comfortable.

"As much as I hate to see Lena hurt," said the Colonel, "I'm rather glad that the third accident wasn't anything more serious."

"I can't go for your jinx theory," Carnie disagreed. "I think something else is responsible

I have the shadow of an idea," he continued, "but I want to talk to the other two performers who were hurt, before I act. Maybe now that they think the jinx is over, they'll give me some information."

"If you'll take over my next show, colonel, I'll go to the hospital to see them," he offered.

"All right," the Colonel agreed. "Sometimes your hunches pay off. I can make out for a few hours."

It was almost dark when Carnie returned to the circus lot. He was carrying a bulky package under his arm. The Colonel, spotting him over the crowd, threaded his way to the Barker, an expectant expression on his face.

"How did it go, Carnie?" he asked anxiously. "Did you find out anything?"

"I'm glad I made the trip," Carnie answered. "The animal trainer and the high-wire walker are getting along fine. They expect to rejoin the show in a couple of days."

"What they told me stacks up with my theory," he continued, "so I stopped in at the general store to do a little shopping for our jinx."

"Then you've changed your mind," the Colonel said.

"Not at all," Carnie said. "When the men in the hospital heard the jinx was over, they told me what they thought caused their accidents."

"You know," he continued, "that just about every performer carries some sort of good luck piece."

"Of course," the Colonel said, "especially those who face danger constantly. It gives them extra confidence. I've known some artists who wouldn't go on unless they had their good luck charm; sometimes it's only an old coin, a rabbit's foot, or a ring. What's that got to do with it?"

"Only that the night before each of the accidents, they both had their lucky pieces stolen. They decided to go on with their acts anyway, even though they didn't like it," Carnie explained.

"Wait a minute," the Colonel said, "I think I'm beginning to get what you're driving at. Anyone wanting to break down the morale of a circus might find out what each performer carried as a lucky piece, and then steal it."

"That's the general idea, Colonel," Carnie agreed. "I figure that the loss of the charms would make the performer jittery, and things that wouldn't ordinarily bother him could cause trouble; like a big cat fight or a slip on the high wire."

"You don't have to be so mysterious about this, Carnie," the Colonel said knowingly. "I know you think it's Blackmeer from United who has been causing the trouble. He certainly has had plenty of opportunity to find out about everybody in the circus."

"Maybe he thinks if he can do enough damage, he can get me to sell out for practically nothing, or frighten my performers into leaving a jinxed show."

"Don't go jumping at conclusions," Carnie cautioned, "until we have proof."

"I don't need any proof," Colonel Lane bellowed, waving his arms angrily, "I'll run that crooked character so far off the grounds, it'll take him a week to get back by train. I won't have anyone endangering the lives of my artists with his sneaky tricks."

"Take it easy, Colonel," Carnie advised. "Just give me a couple of hours to set a trap, and we'll have plenty of proof. If you need me for anything, I'll be over by the menagerie tent."

It was just before the evening performance, that Carnie Calahan hunted up the Colonel and brought him to the rear of the animal tent, near where the horses were picketed. "Do you have him, Carnie?" the Colonel asked excitedly, "where is he?"

Carnie pointed to a bale of hay. Next to it was an oval wire cage in which a small brown animal cowered, bright-eyed with fear. Also in the cage was a shiny object.

"It's only a rat," the Colonel objected. "And that's Lena's lucky horseshoe pin."

"Sure," Carnie grinned, "but a special kind of rat. People in these parts call it a pack or trade rat, because it picks up shining objects and leaves stones in their place."

"Clyde and Equalo said they left their lucky pieces on a trunk while they slept, and when they awoke there was a small stone in place of the charms. I'll bet there's one on Lena's dressing table now, too. The men had forgotten about the stones until I asked them."

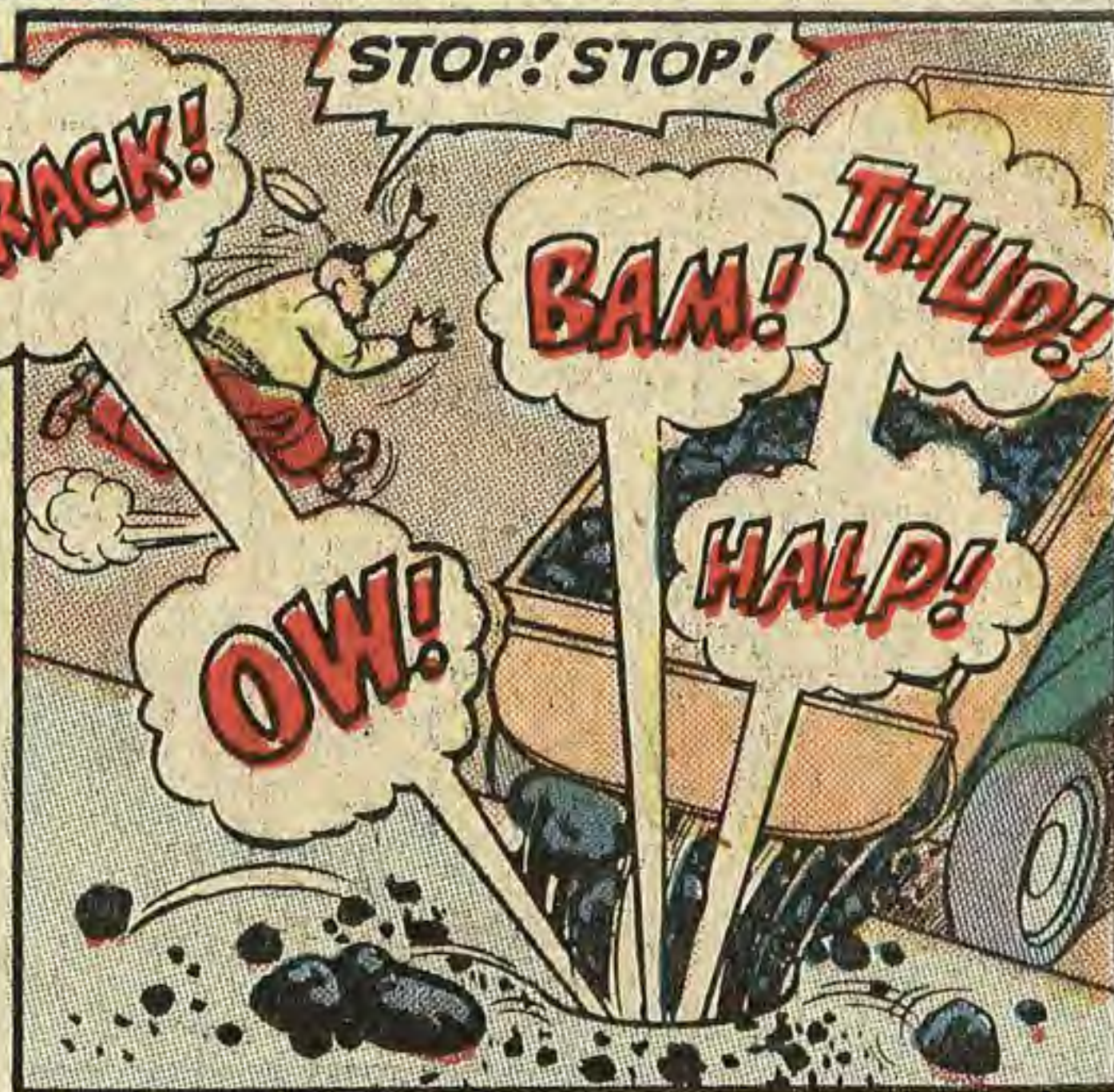
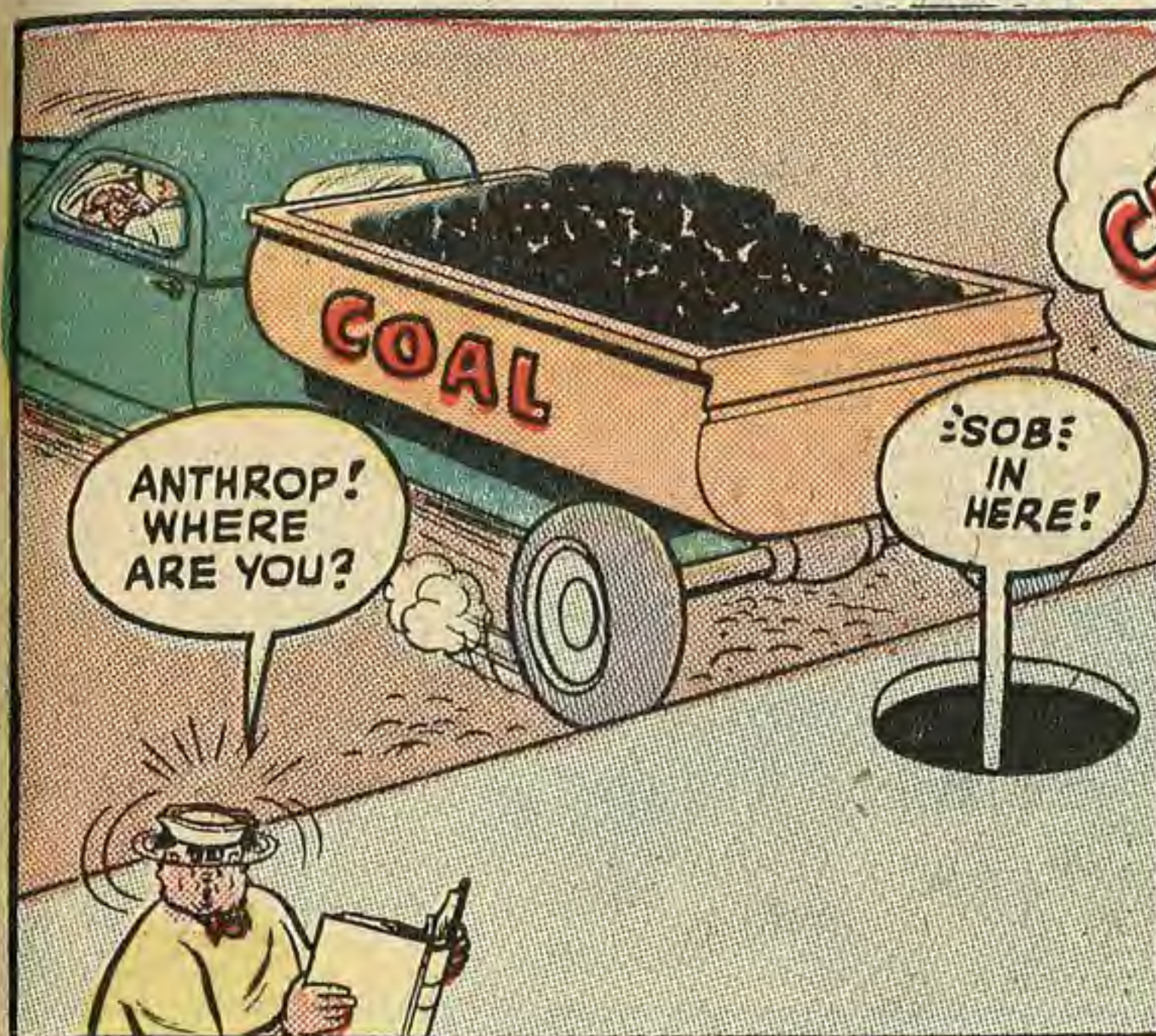
"This section of the country is full of pack rats," Carnie concluded. "We'll have to warn our superstitious performers to take particular care of their lucky pieces."

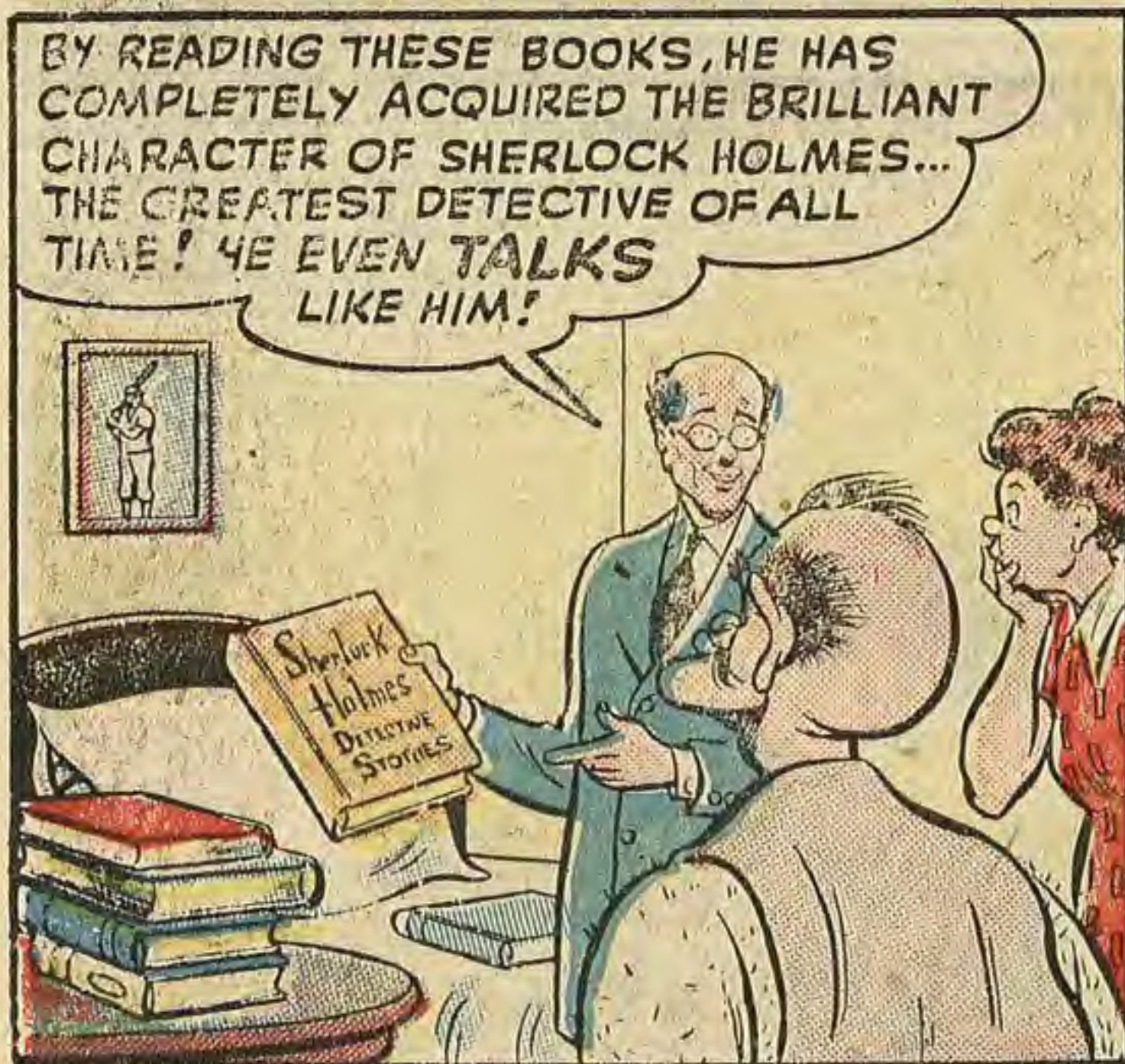
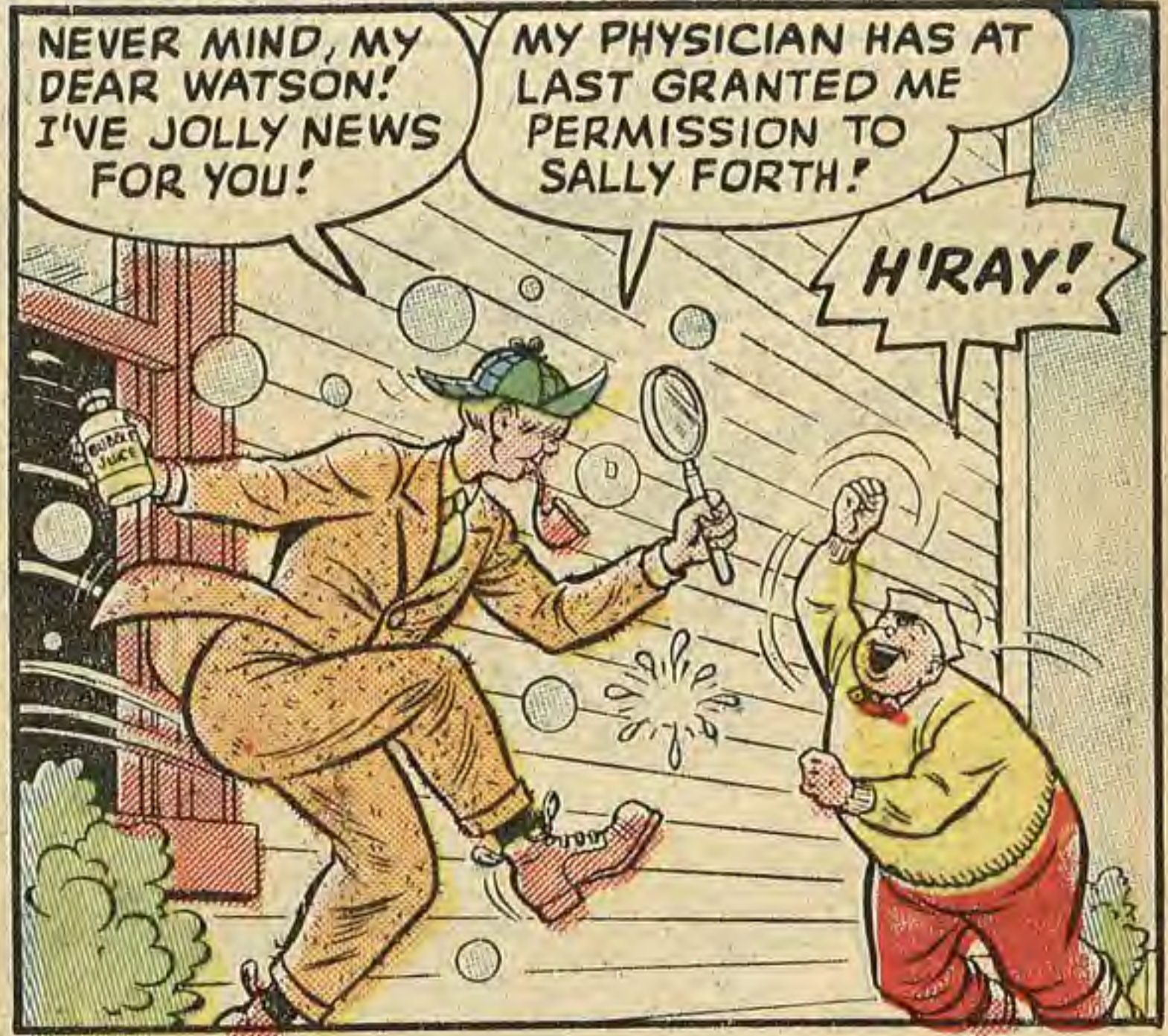
"That still doesn't disprove the jinx theory," the Colonel objected. "The pack rat did steal the lucky charms, and it did cause accidents. He was the jinx."

"Maybe so," Carnie grinned, "but if the lucky pieces were so lucky, how come the pack rat was trapped. He had all three of them."

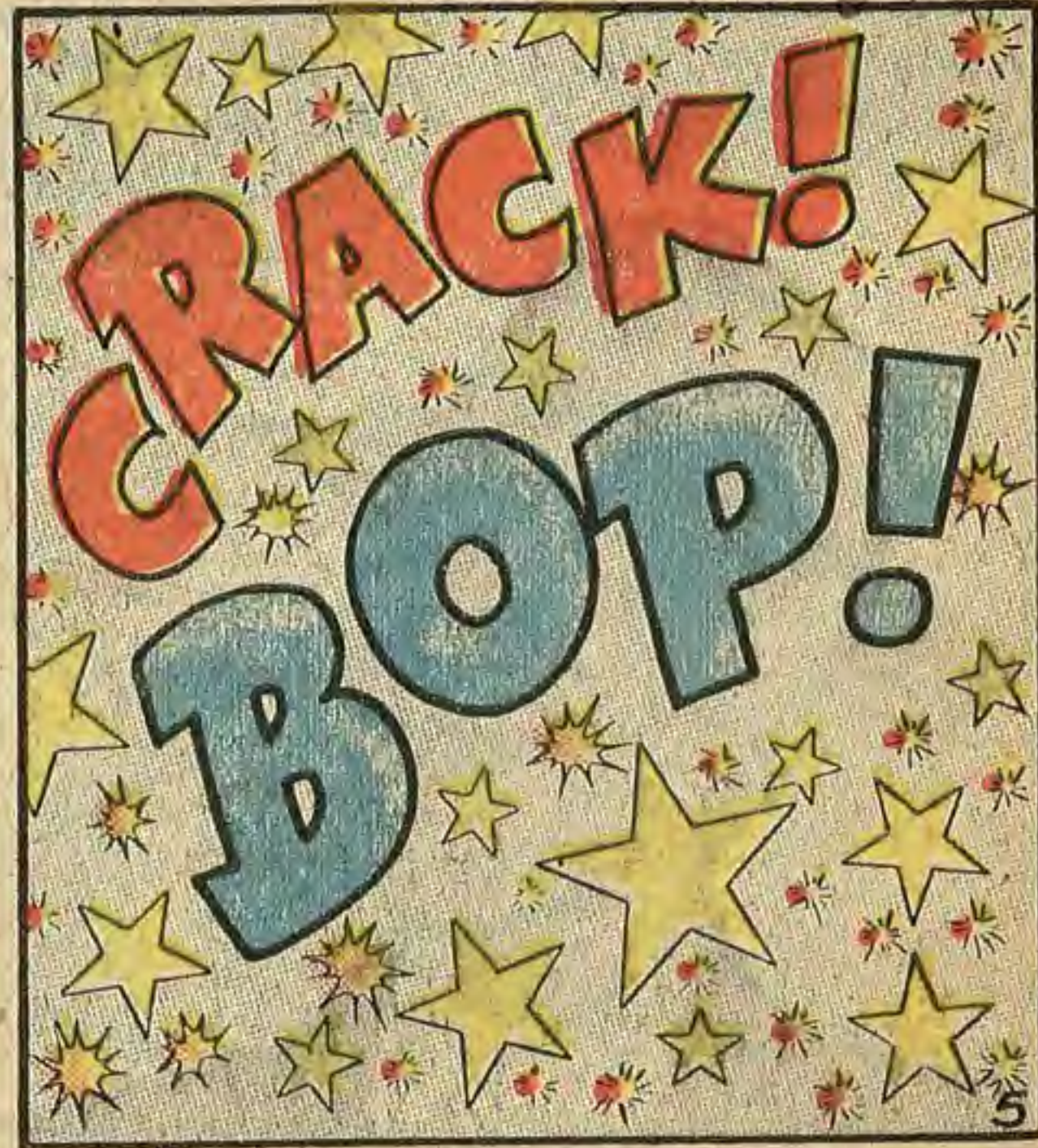
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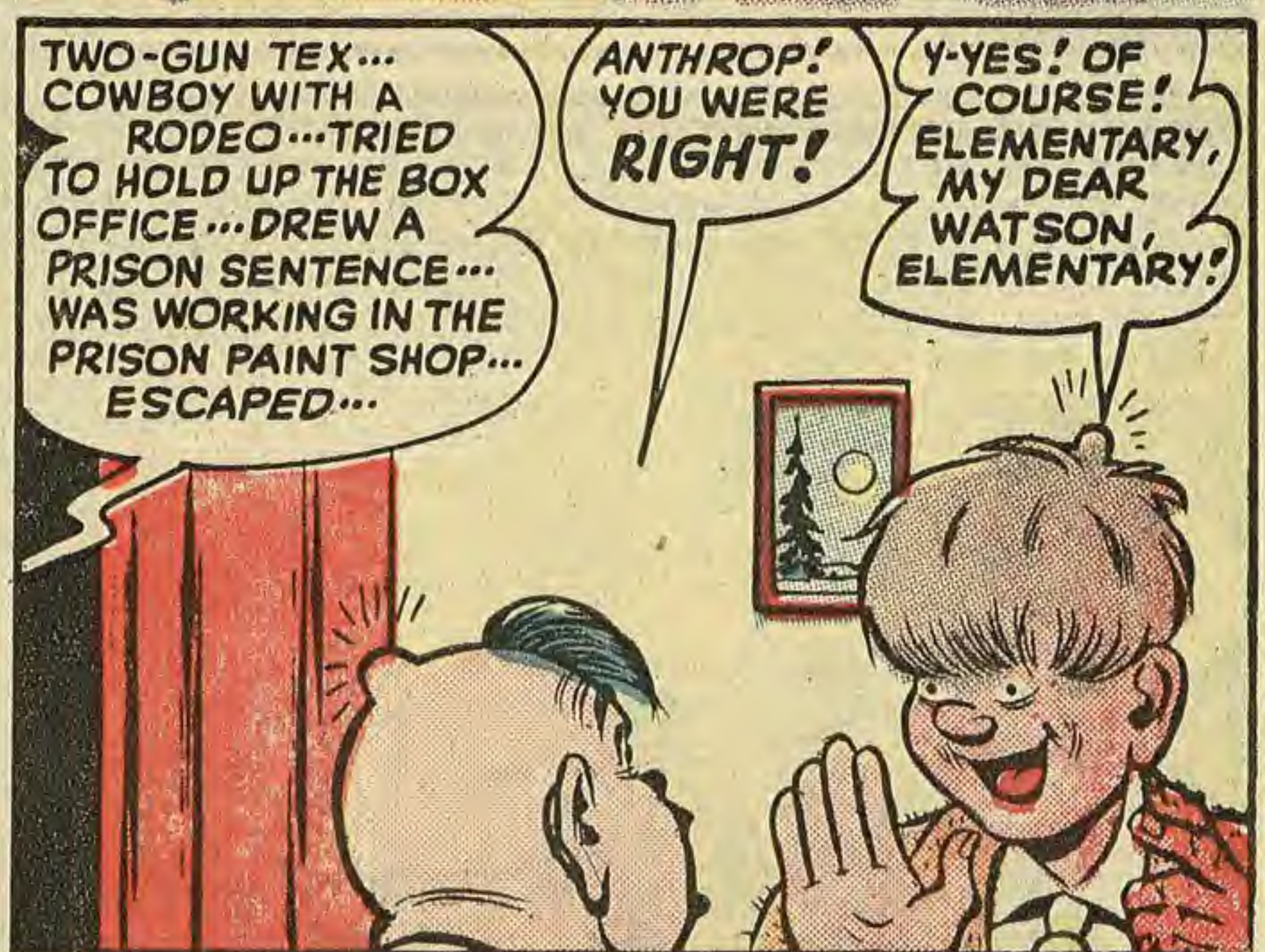












Steve WOOD



A mobster's adopted daughter forces Steve Wood, waterfront private detective, to adopt strong measures in solving a murder case in which he finds himself a pawn!

A WEEK SINCE DAVEY BRITTON, KING OF THE WATERFRONT MOBSTERS, WAS MURDERED ON THIS LUSH YACHT OF HIS, AND WE STILL HAVEN'T A GOOD CLUE! THAT'S WHY, BLAST IT, I CALLED YOU IN ON THE CASE!



WHAT ABOUT JERDO'S CIGARETTE LIGHTER... FOUND AT BRITTON'S FEET... WITH ONLY JERDO'S FINGERPRINTS ON IT?

YEAH, HE ADMITTED BEING IN THE CABIN TWO HOURS BEFORE THE MURDER, BUT....



BUT I HEAR YOU TURNED HIM LOOSE THIS MORNING BECAUSE THE LIGHTER WASN'T ENOUGH TO INDICT HIM!

GOT A HUNCH THAT LIGHTER WILL TOUCH OFF SOME HOTTER EVIDENCE!



BRITTON WAS FOUND STRETCHED OUT THERE... WITH POWDER BURNS ON HIS LEFT TEMPLE!

AND YOU SAY YOU FOUND THE BULLET THAT KILLED HIM IN THE BULKHEAD, BUT YOU HAVEN'T FOUND THE GUN THAT FIRED THE BULLET... RIGHT?

I'VE QUESTIONED JERDO, MARPHY HALE AND THE REST OF BRITTON'S MOB... INCLUDING ALYCE CARTERS, BRITTON'S ADOPTED DAUGHTER...

BET BRITTON WOULDN'T HAVE LIKED ALYCE TREATED LIKE A CRIMINAL! SHE WAS A QUEEN TO HIM, AND HE WOULDN'T LET HER HANG AROUND WITH HIS MOB!

STEVE, I'M CALLING IT A DAY AND GRABBING SOME SHUT-EYE! I DOUBT THAT YOU'LL PROVE ANYTHING ON YOUR OWN, BUT IF YOU DO...

I SHOULD GIVE THE COPS A FULL SHARE OF THE CREDIT, EH, FLANAGAN!

THINK I'LL MOSEY AROUND THE WATERFRONT CAFES...

Minutes Later...

HMM... THAT CIGARETTE LIGHTER COULD HAVE BEEN PLANTED... BUT BY WHOM? HUH?

MR. WOOD!

I'VE BEEN TRYING DESPERATELY TO SEE YOU, MR. WOOD! YOU WEREN'T AT YOUR OFFICE OR YOUR HOME, SO...

WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE WATERFRONT, LITTLE QUEEN? YOU'RE ALYCE CARTERS, AREN'T YOU?

YES! A MAN PHONED MY HOME ABOUT AN HOUR AGO! HE SAID HE'S THE ONE WHO GOT BRITTON... AND... AND THAT I'D BE NEXT!

SO YOU COME TO ME INSTEAD OF GOING TO THE POLICE!

I KNOW YOUR REPUTATION ON THE WATERFRONT, MR. WOOD... OHHH!

BANG!





The next day...



HI, SALLY! A LITTLE LATE THIS MORNING... RATHER BUSY LAST NIGHT!

HELLO, STEVE!

I HOPE NOTHING COMES UP TONIGHT TO INTERFERE WITH OUR THEATRE DATE!



I'LL PHONE PEG ALLEN TO GIVE THIS A WRITE-UP!



HELLO, PEG! STEVE! A POSSIBLE ANGLE ON THE BRITTON MURDER! JERDO MAPES AND ALYCE CARTERS PLAN TO GET MARRIED TONIGHT!

THANKS, STEVE! I'LL GET THE STORY ON THE FRONT PAGE OF TONIGHT'S FINAL EDITION!



PEG ALLEN AGAIN--SPEAKING OF INTERFERENCE!

WHAT'S THE ANGLE, STEVE, IF I MAY ASK?

JUST A LITTLE WHITE LIE TO FIND OUT WHO ALYCE'S NEW BOY FRIEND IS!

That night...



THE NIGHT EDITIONS ARE ON THE STREET NOW, SO ALYCE OUGHT TO RECEIVE A CALLER PRETTY SOON! I CAN PARK HERE AND SEE WHO GOES IN HER HOUSE!

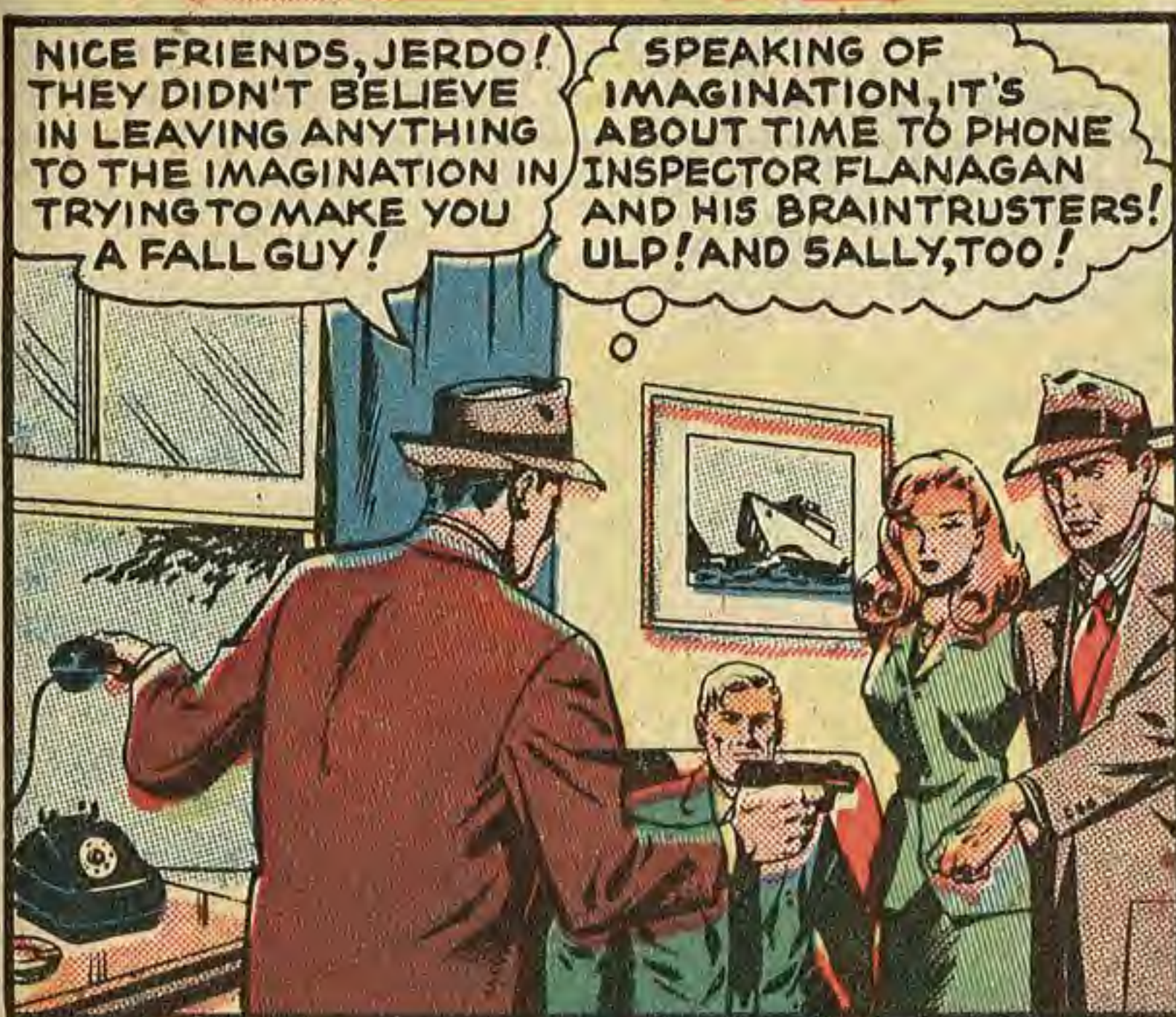
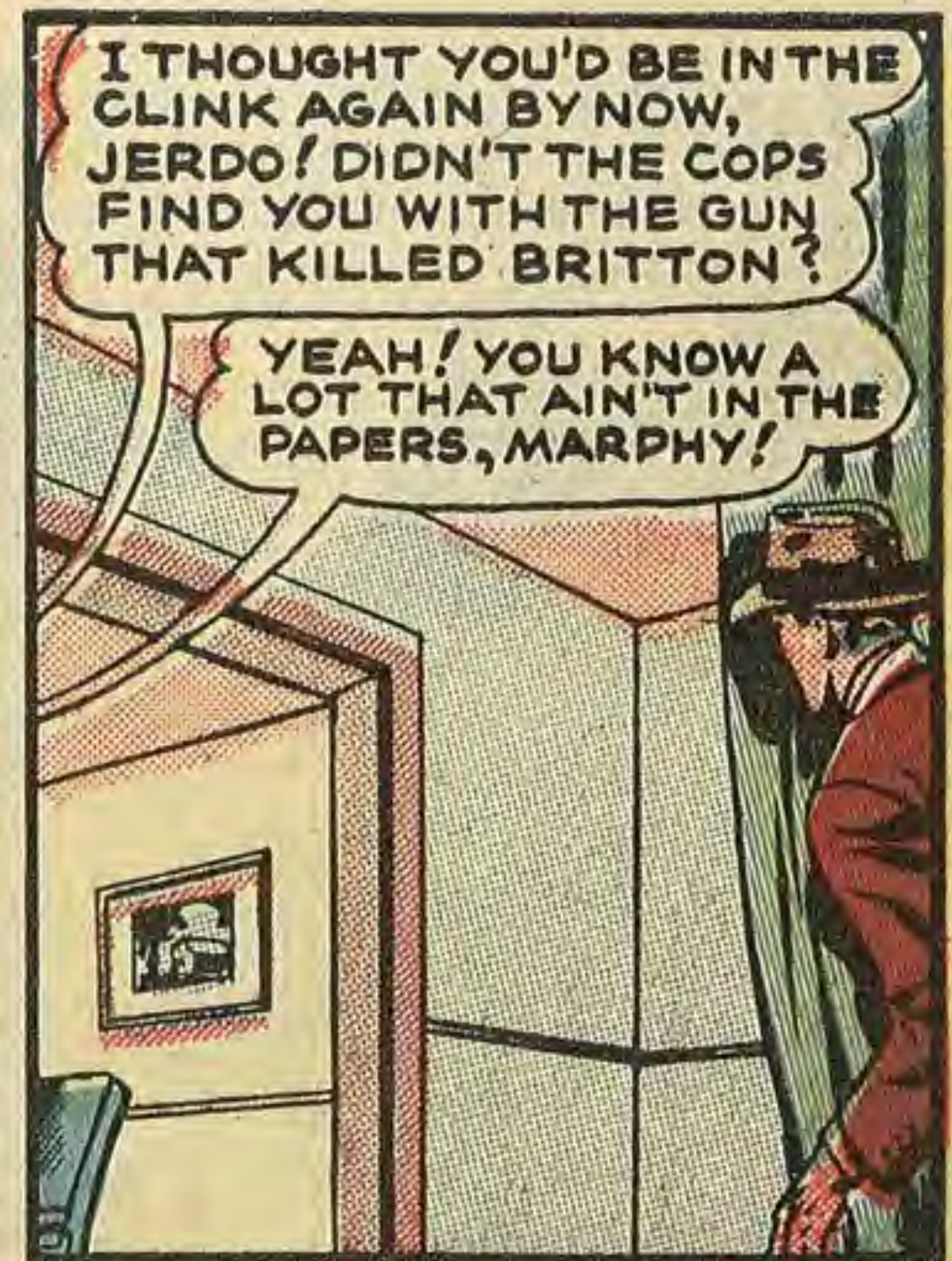


AH, I FIGURED JERDO WOULD SHOW UP! HOPE THE REST OF THE HUNCH PAYS OFF! I'LL DUCK BEHIND THE HEDGE IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE AND WAIT FOR THE NEXT CUSTOMER!



... RIGHT ON THE FRONT PAGE, TOO! I'LL FIX 'EM!

LOOKS LIKE THE NEWSPAPER STORY DID THE TRICK! THERE'S MARPHY HALE, ANOTHER OF BRITTON'S MOB! COULD BE HE'S THE UNKNOWN FLY IN THE OINTMENT!



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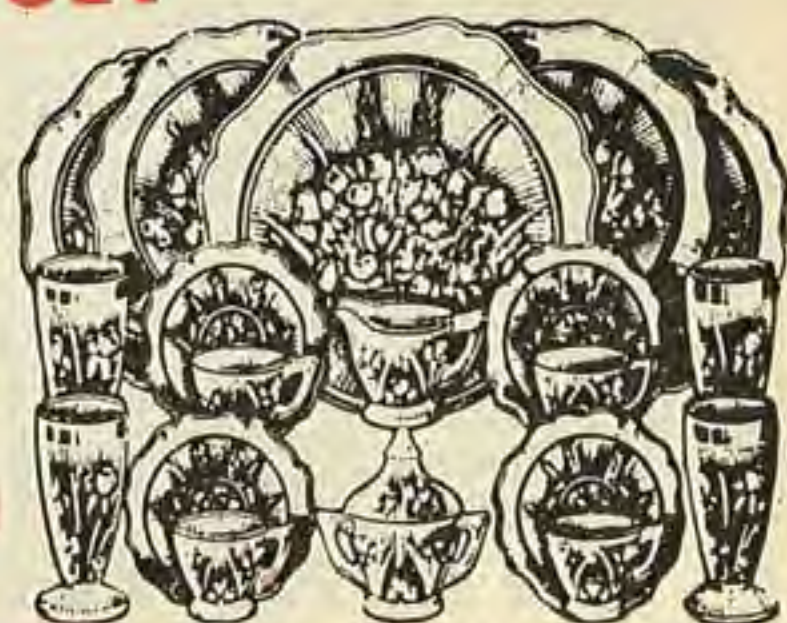
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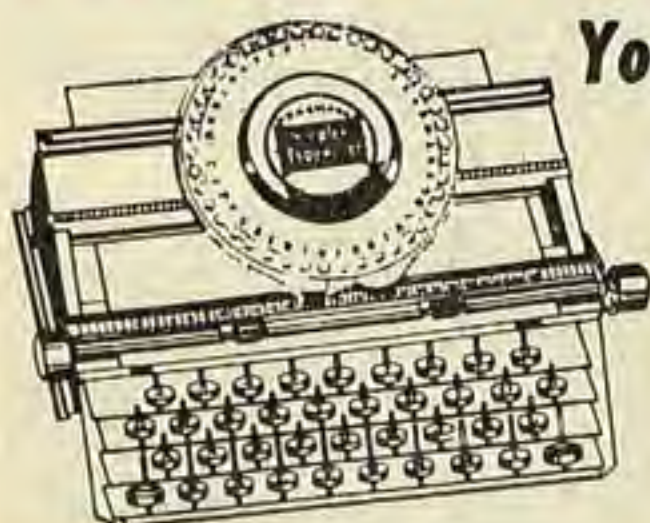
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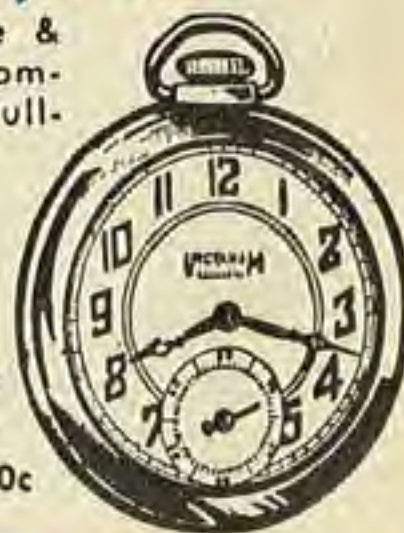
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